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THE TEAM.

OR, The Detective Combine's Big Pull.

The Story of the "Genteel Crook."

BY J. C. COWDRICK,
AUTHOR OF "BROADWAY BILLY" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE BEAGLES SCENT A MYSTERY.

"GREAT jumpin' Jew's-harps! Silent Seth, if I know a kitten from a kangaroo, and I think I do, there's a diffikilty a-brewin' here. What do you think about it? Nothin' to say, eh? I'll bet you are doin' a powerful lot o' hard thinkin', though, an' I wish you would do some of your thinkin' out 'loud once in a while, then a feller would know what sort o' grist your think-works was grindin'."

So rattled Happy Harry, one of Broadway Billy's young ferrets.

His partner, Silent Seth, made no response, but looked fixedly upon the occasion of Harry's excited remarks.

The two were coming up the street together on their way to Broadway Billy's office, when a slight commotion just ahead of them attracted their attention and they witnessed a rather unusual proceeding.

A young and pretty woman coming down the street toward them had suddenly stopped on meeting a man and woman who were going in the opposite direction. She put some small object into the man's hand, and he continued on his way at once, leaving the two women together.

No sooner that done than the woman who had been with the man threw a long cloak about the young woman's shoulders, and gave her a hat, larger than the one she had on, with which the young woman immediately replaced the smaller hat, handing that to the other woman in exchange. That done, they went on their way. It had all taken place within a few brief seconds.

"We must follow them," Silent Seth briefly decided.

"I should say we must," agreed Harry.

"Which one do you want to shadow?"

"Either one; it makes no difference," was the reply.

"I'll toss you a cent to see who tackles the man. He's got the prize, whatever it may be, and we mustn't lose sight o' him."

"Be quick."

Happy Harry took a penny from his pocket and gave it a toss into the air, at the same time calling out:

"Heads for me and the man!"

Both sprung to look as soon as the penny struck, and they found Harry had lost. It was the business of Silent Seth to follow the man.

"All right," assented Harry. "It was a fair chance and I'm not kicking. I hope ye have good-luck, Seth, and don't get inter no consarned difficulties, as the boss used to call 'em."

As all the parties were still going in the same direction, the boys continued on together.

They had not gone far when a carriage drew in to the curb, coming toward them; the two women got in, and the carriage started on again, immediately.

The man ahead who had been with the elder of the two women, and to whom the younger woman had given something, looked back about this time, and seeing the women get into the vehicle, turned immediately and began to retrace his steps. It was a peculiar proceeding.

"Jumpin' Jew's-harps!" Happy Harry exclaimed again. "This is gettin' to be amusin'. What do ye make of it, my deaf an' dumb chum? No use my wastin' breath on you, though, so I'll leave ye to your fate while I foller the carriage. I'll hev to be as slick as varnish about it, too, or that man will get onto me. Ta-ta!"

So they parted, Seth loitering along to allow the man to overtake and pass him, while Harry hastened off in the direction the carriage had taken, determined to keep it in sight at all hazards.

The carriage moved at a slow pace, so it was not difficult for him to keep up with it, and it did not give him a very long chase.

It drew up, presently, before one of the large stores on Broadway, and the two women alighted and went in. It was one of the stores patronized by New York's elite.

The carriage had the appearance of being a private one, and the man perched on the box was in a livery of green and buttons—principally buttons, with a hat that had the usual band and buckle of the Jehu in bondage. On the side panel of the carriage was a coat of arms.

"I'd like ter know what all this means, anyhow?" mused Harry, as he sauntered into the store behind the women, some moments later.

He had been taking a survey of the carriage, man and team, in order to fix them in his mind for future identity, if occasion required it. He was careful upon all such points.

"Seems ter me there must be a son o' Ham in the fence somewheres, sure," he further mused.

"What's all this peculiar business about, anyhow, if there ain't? You have got ter buckle down to it, Harry, and see what's in it, if you want to keep your grip onto the confidence o' William o' Broadway."

Having entered the store, he looked around, and soon had his suspects in sight once more.

Following the way they led, he presently saw them stop at a counter where several truly elegant young men were ready to serve silk and satin dress patterns.

Harry went on to the same section of the huge mart and stopped near the opposite counter, where he stood with his hands crossed behind him and waited, his face toward the two women he had followed.

He was quite near enough to overhear what was said.

The younger of the two asked to see some patterns in palest pink satin, and the Lord Chesterfield behind the counter pulled down his vest and proceeded to attend to business with that elegance and grace which only the truly gilt-edge salesmen possess.

Several pieces were shown before a selection was made; but, finally, the lady was satisfied with one, and paid for it.

"To whom shall we send it?" the salesman inquired.

"Send it to Mrs. Cleon Cuthbert, at No. — avenue," was the airish reply, and the two women started to turn away.

As they did so the younger drew her watch, a dainty, jeweled affair, and gave a glance at it, when she uttered a low exclamation in a disappointed, regretful tone.

"My watch has stopped!" she said. "How careless of me not to wind it last night! I don't know that I ever missed doing so before, mamma. Can you tell me what time it is, sir?" turning to the salesman.

Beau Brummel drew forth a gold watch and gave the desired information, and then, as he saw the lady about trying to wind and set her watch, with her gloves on, he humbly begged to be allowed to perform the service for her.

The offer was readily accepted, and the service quickly and deftly performed, when, with a gracious "Thank you," the lady took her watch and moved off with her mother to another counter.

Very trifling details, all these, yet they might have bearing upon what was to follow.

It was just about this time that a hand was laid on Happy Harry's shoulder.

Looking up, he beheld a tall gentleman standing over him, who politely but firmly put the interrogation:

"What do you want, young gentleman?"

Happy Harry understood at once that this was a floor-walker, whose suspicion he had aroused.

Harry was well dressed, clean, neat and tidy in appearance, and there was nothing about him to indicate that he was anything but honest; but he had been giving earnest attention to the two ladies.

The hand upon his shoulder was simply laid there, but Harry felt that upon his answer depended whether the fingers were to tighten upon his flesh or not.

"I don't want anything, sir," he answered; "I'm only waiting."

"For whom or what are you waiting, then?"

"I don't know what right you have to ask such questions?" rejoined Harry, civilly. "I don't know who you are, sir. I'm sure I haven't done anything out of the way, have I?"

"You have been watching those ladies rather too attentively, that is all I have seen amiss in your conduct. Do you know them?"

"No, sir; never saw them before in my life. Was only looking at 'em while I waited. As my presence don't seem to be wanted in here, though, I'll amble out and do the rest of my waiting outside."

The hand had now been removed.

"Ob, no; if you are in company with some one there is no harm in your waiting right where you are. Do not imagine we are so strict as that; we merely have to be cautious, you know, since every person is a stranger and we know not who are or what he or she may be."

"Well, I'll go out anyhow," declared Harry. "I'm tired of standing around in here."

So saying, he moved leisurely off in the direction of the door, and in a few moments was on the walk outside.

"That settled that, anyhow," he said to himself, when out. "I had to be on my good behavior or they would have detained me so that I'd 'a' missed the scent when they did let me go. It pays to be truly good. Well, I've learned more facts than I s'posed I would."

He repeated to himself the name and address he had heard, in order that they might not slip from his mind, and while he waited he amused himself by trying to guess the meaning of the coat of arms on the side of the carriage. It looked, to him, like a lion and a monkey doing a circus performance.

After awhile the two women appeared, got into the carriage, and were driven off, Harry again joining in the procession.

The horses were slow, proceeding at little bet-

ter than a walk, and as before the young shadower had no trouble to keep up.

Presently the driver turned up one of the avenues, and a car coming along at the right time, Harry got aboard of that. And, once upon the avenue, the driver of the carriage whipped up a little and carriage and car kept about an even pace for a long distance.

When the carriage turned, as it finally did, Harry dropped from the car, and from that point he had not far to go.

The carriage drew up and stopped at the number the woman had given, and so ended the trail.

But, the adjutant of Broadway Billy was not yet done. He meant to know something more about the women if he could, and about the whole affair, if possible.

At the house adjoining a servant was out in the front cleaning the windows of the basement rooms, and stepping in, Harry addressed her in a polite and civil manner, asking:

"Is this where Mrs. Cuthbert lives?"

"No, sor," was the answer. "It's dhe next house dhere."

"Thank you. You see, I have come around to make some inquiries on the quiet, and maybe you can tell me just what I want to know—"

"O! can tell ye nothing," was the snapped interruption. "Sure, an' ye want to know anythin' about dhe Cuthberts ye must go to dhem fur your information, so ye must. I'll tell ye nothing."

"Then I'm much obliged to you for nothing," retorted Harry; and, tipping his hat, he hastened away.

CHAPTER II.

SILENT SETH'S STILL HUNT.

WHAT of Silent Seth?

He followed the man with that care and caution for which he was becoming noted. He stood still watching Harry and the retreating carriage until the man came along and passed him; then he went upon the trail, having allowed the man to get a little distance ahead.

The man looked to be about forty-five years of age. He was well-dressed, wore a silk hat and gloves, and carried a cane. He appeared to be merely out for a stroll.

The small package which the young woman had given him had disappeared from his hand. He had evidently put it in his pocket.

It was no trouble for Seth to follow, for the man having no suspicion that he was shadowed, continued his leisurely gait, swinging his cane and taking in the sights as he went along, till finally he came to a large jewelry store, which he entered.

Seth hardly knew whether to follow him in or not, but decided to remain outside.

There was nothing to hinder him from taking the beggar's privilege of looking at the things in the windows, and he amused himself in that way.

Looking in, though, he found that he could see quite plainly what was going on within, since an awning without and electric lights within made it possible for him to see quite a distance back into the store.

He saw his man at the counter on the opposite side.

One of the salesmen approached him, and the customer was displaying something which he held out on a piece of paper.

The package was not the same which Seth had seen the young woman put into the man's hand only a short time before. That had been of a dark color, like a small box.

Seth watched, while pretending to be merely looking at the display in the window, and he regretted that he could not hear what was being said.

The man, on entering, had inquired for the head of the establishment, and the superintendent came forward to learn what he wanted.

"I have two diamonds which I desire to sell," the stranger announced.

"We do not care to buy such things of strangers, sir," was the response. "Especially so if the diamonds are valuable ones."

"Which is about what I imagined you would say, sir. However, while I am a stranger to you I can, nevertheless, satisfy you as to who and what I am. My name is Warton Underboy. I am at present stopping at the — Hotel."

"Whom can you mention in reference," Mr. Underboy?

"For one, Mr. James Q. Shield, who is stopping at the same hotel and whose acquaintance I made there."

"I know Mr. Shield. You will allow me to telephone to him, of course."

"Shall be pleased if you will do so."

"Well, let me see the diamonds."

Then it was that the stranger drew the piece of paper from his pocket and held it out for the other's investigation.

The Diamond expert took the diamonds up singly and examined each in turn and with critical eye. Presently he inquired:

"What price do you expect to get for these, sir?"

"Your price, if it is fair," was the response. "I bought the gems in London six years ago, and gave just a thousand pounds for them."

"You have no objection to my inquiring your reason for selling?"

"Assuredly not. I bought them for my wife. She is now dead. Having no use for them, while I have need of the money, I have come to the conclusion to part with them for whatever fair price they will bring."

"Why did you select our house?"

"It is first class, one-reason; it is nearest the hotel, the other."

"Well, I see no reason why we cannot come to an agreement, then, sir. Will you come into the office, please?"

The superintendent led the way to the rear of the store, where he opened the door of a richly furnished office and ushered the stranger in.

One of the proprietors was there, and the superintendent made known the object of the man's visit in few words.

"Let me see the stones," the proprietor asked.

They were exhibited, and after looking at them he said further:

"Have Smithson step this way."

This personage was called, and entered—a little old man, very thin and wrinkled.

"Estimate these diamonds, Smithson," directed the proprietor.

The little old man took the stones and turned to a table near by, where he gave them a most thorough and critical examination.

Having done, he penciled the result upon a card and handed it, together with the diamonds, to his employer.

"We will give you four thousand dollars for the pair, sir," that gentleman immediately announced.

"I accept it, sir, and thank you for being so liberal with me."

With a wave of the hand the proprietor dismissed all that, and reaching for a check-book, drew up a check for the amount.

"You can get the money readily enough, as soon as identified," he remarked, as he delivered the check.

"Oh! yes; there will be no trouble about that. I can get some one at the hotel to render me that service. If not, I am acquainted at another bank and can soon make it all right. Thank you, sir."

With that he bowed himself out, the superintendent going with him.

"If it would be more convenient for you, Mr. Underboy," the latter remarked as they walked toward the door, "one of our young men could go with you to the bank, since there is no doubt but the transaction is all right."

"It would be convenient, sir, in point of saving me time; but, no matter, I will not trouble you."

"No great trouble, sir. Here, Jefferson, go with this gentleman to the bank and identify him as Mr. Warton Underboy."

One of the employees of the house responded promptly, and the two left the store in company, Silent Seth again taking up the trail and following.

Arriving at the bank, Seth followed them in pretty closely, and observed all that took place.

He saw his suspect indorse the check and present it at a window, where a large sum of money was counted out and paid over to him—the man from the store at the same time giving the signal that it was all right.

The business done, Underboy thanked the clerk, and they parted, Underboy going off in one direction and the clerk in the other.

Silent Seth stuck to the trail determinedly.

He had learned but little so far, beyond the fact of the check and the money the man had received.

Like Harry on his "lay," he wanted to learn more before he gave it up and appeared at the office. The little he knew so far was not of great account, he believed.

The man walked more rapidly now than he had heretofore, and appeared to have some settled destination in view, or an appointment with somebody.

Seth kept at a fair distance behind him, ready to conform to any circumstances that might come about.

Presently he saw something which gave him a thrill of renewed interest.

Some ash-cans were standing on the curb here and there, and as the suspect passed one of them, Seth saw him pass his hand over it, and drop something into it.

As he did so the man turned his head to note whether any one was looking at him, and seeing him in the act of turning, Seth's head was down immediately and he appeared to be counting the cracks in the sidewalk.

When Seth looked up, the next moment, the man was going straight on, head erect and eyes evidently to the front.

Silent Seth was determined to know what the man had thrown away.

When he came abreast of the ash-can several posts partly screened him from sight of the man ahead, and Seth stopped and looked into the dirt receptacle. And the first object to meet his gaze was a small box, crushed and broken, evidently a jeweler's box.

Taking it out, Seth passed right along, examining it as he went.

It proved to be, or to have been, a neat box, leather covered, and lined with satin.

On the bottom of it was the stamp of a well-known jewelry house, and holes in the satin showed that it had contained a pair of ear-rings.

Thrusting the box into his pocket, Seth pressed on after his game, and at last located him at the Hotel.

Here the man seemed to be at home, and Seth, going to one of the porters, put the question:

"Do you know who that gentleman is, the one you bowed to?"

"Guess I does, boy," was the response from the colored gentleman. "Dat am Mistah Warton Underboy. I knows ebbery guest beah. Mighty fine gentleman, he is."

There Seth dropped the matter.

CHAPTER III.

HAPPY HARRY'S HUSTLE FOR POINTS.

WHEN Happy Harry hastened off, after the rebuff from the Irish girl, he was still in time to keep the carriage in sight.

He knew the trail had ended, so far as the women were concerned, and that it was of little use for him to waste time around there. He might be able to pick up some information, but that could be done at any time.

Nor had he any especial object in following the carriage, though he reasoned that it might be well enough to know where it put up so that he could find the driver of it at any time he might be wanted.

So, Harry hustled away from the house and followed the carriage.

"Yes, sir," he mused, as he hastened along, "there's a son o' Ham hidin' in the fence somewhere. Wish I had been born the seventh son of a seventh sister, or somethin' of that sort, then mebbly I'd have seventh sight enough to see into things further than I can now. If it was the philosopher I'll bet he would have the bottom facts on top in no time. Wonder how he is makin' out? He's a wonder, is that same Silent Seth, and I wish I had some of his hard sense."

He had gained upon the carriage, and finally had the satisfaction of running it down, as it drew up before a big livery stable, and the doors being open, it went in, team, carriage, and all.

"That settles it," decided Harry. "It ain't a private rig at all, but a hired one. That's a stale game here in Gotham. It's the easiest thing in the world to be somebody and have a coach with a vest-of—I mean a coat-of-arms, if you have got the ragged green to ante for it all. Reckon that must cost a couple o' hundred a month, at least; enough to keep a poor man's family right in the swim, with somethin' in the larder for breakfast. Guess I'll stop here and angle fer p'int."

There were a good many loiterers about the doors, and Harry made himself one of them.

"What's the 'citement?" he curiously inquired.

"Do ye see the 'citement?" one fellow counter-queried.

"I don't see it, and that's the reason I asked. Thought maybe you had a speeded thoroughbred on exhibition, or somethin' of that sort."

"Want to buy one of that sort?"

"Buy one! Jumpin' Jew's-harps! If thoroughbreds were sellin' at a dollar a head I couldn't buy the toenail of one."

This raised a laugh, and Harry had made himself "solid" with the men and boys who stood around as if waiting for something to turn up.

"You ain't one of the Four Hundred, then, eh?" observed one man.

"Nixey!" answered Harry. "I'm one of the sixty-four millions. I'm only a waif of the

common herd, so to say; no gold spoon was around when I appeared upon the stage."

"What do you do for a livin'?"

"Eat, mostly."

There was another laugh at that.

"He's too many for you, Dan," another of the group remarked.

"I guess he is," Dan admitted.

"That rig that just came in was no slouch," Harry remarked. "I was wonderin' what that curious jigger on the side panel means. Anybody know?"

"Why, that's a coat-of-arms," informed Dan.

This man seemed to belong at the stables in some capacity or other.

"I knowed it was a coat, vest, or pants, or somethin' like that," Harry declared; "but, what does it mean?"

"Guess you'll have to ask the wise men, young man. I give it up. Don't believe it means much of anything; it's only a fad the dudes have got onto."

"Ain't ketchin', is it?"

"No, I guess not."

"F I thought it was I'd keep clear of it, you bet! I don't own a carriage, nor even a banana-cart, and I'd hate like sin to have such a thing as that stamped on me anywheres. It looks as if the lion was tryin' to double the monkey up and sit down on him, don't it?"

His manner of expressing himself amused the loungers greatly.

"Whose turn-out is it, anyway?" Harry asked next.

"Why, it's ours, of course," announced Dan.

"You don't mean to say you are a dude, with the fad for lion-and-monkey pictures pasted around, do you?"

"No, not much. I mean the stable owns the rig. It's a hired-out one, you see."

"So I s'posed, and that was what I was gettin' at. Who is the dude that is so far gone that he has got lions and monkeys on the brain, or on the place where the brain ought to be?"

"Seems to me you want to know a good deal?"

"A feller wouldn't know anything in this world, if he didn't try to find out things."

"Well, the turnout is hired by a man named Cuthbert, who lives up on—avenue. Do you feel any better now?"

"Not a bit. I have heard it said that a little learnin' is a poor thing, so now I am worse off than I was in the first place. Curiosity is a terrible complaint."

"It seems to be in your case."

"Why, I could ask you forty questions right in one breath, and never lay a hair, either."

"I believe you."

"But, I won't, for if I did you'd be likely to kick me all the way from here to next Sunday. I'd want to know who Cuthbert is; what he does for a living; how many in family; who their cook is; how much rent they pay—"

"Hold on, don't go any further. I couldn't answer your questions if I wanted to, and I assure you I don't."

The team had now been taken out from the pole, and a couple of stablemen had attacked the carriage with pail and sponge and broom and duster.

The one with the dust-brush had got inside, and when he began to ply them Harry saw some scraps of paper come flying out, fragments no bigger than a nickel.

"Well," Harry remarked, "guess I'll take a last squint at that vest-of—I mean coat-of-arms, and then be off, unless you want to hire a handy feller of my size and shape."

He had stepped within the stable door while speaking.

"Hire you? What could you do around a stable?" asked Dan, with a wink at the others.

"I could draw lady customers by posin' on my good looks, for one thing; but I'd get in my finest work at cleanin' up and keepin' things in order. I'm a reg'lar scavenger at pickin' up. Just see here," and Harry stooped and quickly picked up every scrap of the paper which had been swept from the carriage.

"Didn't I do that slick?" he demanded.

"But, I don't suppose you care to pay high wages for a specialist, so I'll take my parting squint at the lion and monkey, to see which has got the best of the scrimmage by this time, and then I'll jog along."

He looked once again at the coat-of-arms, and then turned away with a wave of the hand and was off.

The men and boys at the stable looked after him, as he walked briskly off down the street, and as they watched him they saw him carelessly fling the scraps of paper to the wind.

The scraps? Hardly!

Harry had deposited them safely in a pocket, and had torn up another piece and cast the bits away for effect, naturally supposing some of the idlers would be looking.

"That was a queer feller," one of the group observed.

"He was that," agreed Dan, "and I was beginning to think maybe he had some object in gathering up them scraps; but I see he's throwed them away again."

"Wonder if his mother's got any more like him?"

"I don't believe she has, for the lightnin' don't often strike twice in one place, and this fellow is lightnin' with his tongue, if nothing more."

So the comments ran for a few minutes, till Harry was out of sight, when he was speedily forgotten.

"Well, wonder what I've picked up now?" the lad questioned himself, as he proceeded in the direction of the office. "Good thing for me, luck came my way at the right time, or I'd never got an idea how to get these scraps. Don't believe I was ever cut out for a detective; in that line I'm likely to prove more of a defective, I guess."

With his half-muttered thoughts running faster than his feet, he hastened along, and in due time was in the neighborhood of the office.

Presently, on turning a corner, he came up with Silent Seth.

"Hello!" he cried. "You here, too, Philosopher? Where are you headin' for now?"

"Office."

"Jumpin' Jew's-harps! You said a whole word that time, didn't you! I'll give ye a mark for that. What did you find out?"

"Not much. No use wasting words telling you now. You'll hear it all when I tell the boss about it."

"Whew!" Harry whistled. "You haven't said so much in one breath in a week, Seth. You are bound to live to be older than old Thuselumm of old."

Seth did not take the trouble to ask why, so Harry continued:

"You are so mighty sparlin' of your breath that you are likely to store away enough o' that useful element to carry you through for a thousand years."

CHAPTER IV.

BROADWAY BILLY'S CLIENT.

BROADWAY BILLY was seated alone in his office when there came a timid knock at the door.

Both the boys were out at the time, not on a case of great importance, having been sent to gather information regarding a certain suspected character.

Billy guessed at once that the applicant was a woman, and one who was unused to visiting offices of the kind. He rose and stepped over to the door and opened it to ascertain how nearly he had guessed aright.

The person was a woman, sure enough, and looked timid and uncertain as her knock had indicated.

"Is Mr. Weston in, sir?" she asked, in a voice that showed suppressed excitement.

"I am he, madam," Billy respectfully answered. "Will you come in?"

He stepped aside to allow the caller to enter, and she passed into the office, Billy closing the door and giving his visitor a chair.

"I—I have called on a—matter of business, sir," the woman explained, in a somewhat nervous tone and manner. "I—I want to engage the services of a detective to—to—"

"I see, I see," Billy interrupted to help her. "Just compose yourself a little, madam, and I will listen to your story. It is quite hard work climbing stairs; I find it so myself. You will get your breath in a moment or two. Don't hurry yourself for I am not busy, as you can see—" words that did much to reassure her, and after a brief silence, she tried again.

"The trouble is, sir," she resumed, "I want to engage some one to follow my husband and find out what he is doing."

"What do you suspect he is doing?" Billy asked.

"Well, sir, I—I more than half believe he has fallen in love with another woman, and that she is taking his love away from me, and—and—"

"Then it is evidence for a divorce you want, eh? I must tell you, madam, as I have told several other applicants, that I do not do business of that sort. I consider it a mean, contemptible—"

"No, no, sir; you mistake my motive. I do not want a divorce, sir; I love my husband well and truly, and I want to save him and win his love back again to myself if I can. I am sure he

is not to blame, for he has always been so good and true to me until—until—now."

"And what has happened now?"

"He leaves me alone all the time, and I have only my baby boy to love, and—and— Oh! boo-hoo-oo—"

Billy saw that this little child-wife—for the woman could not be more than twenty—was thoroughly in earnest, and that her grief was genuine.

He had made it a rule never to take hold of any case that savored of divorce proceedings, for he considered that beneath the notice of a true detective. Those who did that sort of work he looked upon as disreputable hirelings.

But here was something new in that line. Most women who had come to his office with such requests were bold about it, with nothing of nervousness about them as they stated their business; but this little woman was overcome with the telling of her griefs—so innocent and child-like was she.

Broadway Billy waited for her to recover herself a little before he spoke.

"Then it is not with the idea of getting a divorce that you want your husband watched, eh?"

"Oh! no, no! I assure you it is not, sir. I love him too well for that. It is because I love him so well that I am grieved about his conduct."

"Then what is it you do want?"

The woman had already told him that, but Billy was willing to have her repeat.

"I want him brought back to me again. I am willing to forgive everything, if I can only keep his love. Can't you help me, sir?"

"What is your husband's name, madam?"

"I am not going to tell you that unless you say you will help me."

"Ha! Why not?"

"Because I do not want to expose him. Say you will help me, and I will tell you all I can."

"Well, although I have made it a rule not to meddle with matters of this kind, madam, yet I do feel inclined to do what I can in your case. I will help you."

"Thank you, sir. I have read a good deal about you in the papers, and I was sure you would not refuse me."

"Well, let me hear the facts."

The child-wife had now recovered, under Billy's friendly and sympathizing words and manner, and set about telling her story.

"My husband's name is Prince Terger," she began. "He is a jewelry salesman in the house of Aurum and Argent, on Broadway. He makes good wages, and we have been very happy until now."

"And now—?"

"As I have told you, he leaves me alone all the time; he will not tell me what keeps him away so much; he looks bad and troubled; and, I have worried myself almost sick about him."

"What excuse does he make to you?"

"He says he will tell me everything after awhile; that he cannot help keeping a secret from me for the present."

"What, then, makes you think there is another woman in the case?"

"I followed him once, and I saw him meet a woman and go off with her upon his arm."

"Why did you not face him there and then?"

"I was so overcome that I could not move, but fainted, and when I came to, they were gone."

"And you told him about it when you saw him next, of course?"

"No, no; I could not do that. It was the anniversary of our wedding, and as he brought me a nice present, all I could do was to sit and cry."

"What did he say or do?"

"He was grieved, and walked the floor. He was not in the house long, but said he had an important engagement, and went off, saying I should know all that seemed mysterious—should not be kept much longer in suspense; and, somehow, I believed he was not so bad, in spite of what I had seen."

"I believe you are more than half right," Billy declared. "Somehow I feel that this husband of yours is true to you, but has trouble of some sort on his mind that he does not want you to know about. I'll take a look into the case and find out about it. I do not promise to reveal anything to you of what I may learn, however."

"Then what was the use of my coming to you?"

"I'll tell you what I will do! If I find he is in trouble I'll try to get him out of it, or help him if his secret business is honest. If it is the worst, then I will put a word of warning in his ear and drop the case. As I told you, I will not

meddle with divorce matters. I deal in nothing but criminal cases."

"Well, I'll have to be satisfied, I suppose. I hope you can bring him back to me."

"You do not know who that woman was, of course?"

"No; she was a stranger to me."

"Well, no matter. Now, where do you live? I may have occasion to send my office-boy to see you, you know."

The young woman gave her address.

"Very well; I will look into the matter, not for the sake of taking up such a case, but because I believe, somehow, your husband is innocent. You had better go home with that belief in your own mind, if you can."

"Oh! you don't know how much better your words make me feel toward him! I will believe in him, in spite of everything. All I ask is that you will bring him back to me again if you can, for we have been so happy till now. How much am I to pay you, sir?"

"Nothing at all," answered Billy. "As I told you, I do not take cases of this kind, and only take yours because I believe you wrong your husband. You need not call again; if I have anything to tell you I will send a boy. If you do not hear from me you will know I have given up the matter. You will probably hear from me, though, within ten days."

"Thank you, sir. I will patiently wait."

With that the woman took her leave, and Billy turned the matter over in his mind.

"Somehow I feel there is a case going to grow out of this," he mused. "In the first place I believe Prince Terger is in trouble but is more sinned against than sinning, as the saying is. His actions don't tally with those of the usual sport of the town. I mean to look into the matter and find out. That he is mixed up in trouble of some sort, is certain. I'll see."

He paced the floor for a little while, but presently stopped and looked at the time.

"They should have been back long ago," he said to himself. "Something has detained them. Well, as it isn't far, I'll step down to Aurum and Argent's and take a look at Mr. Terger. By the time I get back they'll no doubt be here."

Putting on his hat he went out, closing the door and locking it with the spring latch.

A short walk brought the detective to the big store.

Entering, he was just in time to witness an exciting scene.

An arrest had just been made, and a young man, bare-headed and excited, was in the grasp of a big policeman.

"I assure you that I am innocent," the young man was pleading. "If you only knew the weeks of anxiety I have had, you would believe me. Spare me this disgrace, for the sake of my wife!"

"Impossible, Prince Terger," was the stern response made by an elderly man, evidently one of the proprietors of the store. "Our detectives have brought the matter home to you, and there is no doubt of your guilt, that I can see. I am sorry, after all these years of trust in you."

The young man tried to speak, to defend himself further, but he choked, and then he burst out crying, covering his face with his hands. At the same time the elderly man turned his head to hide his own emotion.

CHAPTER V.

BILLY'S OPINION EXPRESSED.

BROADWAY BILLY's first impression was strengthened by what he heard and saw here.

Upon Mrs. Terger's stating her errand at the office, and telling her story, Billy had, for several reasons, come to the conclusion that this Prince Terger was innocent of wrong-doing.

And now, arriving at such a critical time, he was enabled to judge of him with much more certainty in his estimate. With his quick intuition he believed him innocent of the crime with which he was charged, and for which he had just been arrested, though he did not yet know what the crime was.

There was a minute of silence.

When the prisoner was able to speak, he said:

"Mr. Argent, can you really believe me guilty of this crime?"

The elderly man had recovered himself, and turned and faced the prisoner.

"How can we believe otherwise, in the face of the evidence? Can you disprove that?"

"I have been for weeks trying to get at the truth of the matter and bring the guilty person to answer for the theft."

"That is not a very likely story," observed one of the detectives.

"And why isn't it?" demanded the prisoner.

"Because your actions give the lie to it; that is, your actions during the time we have watched you."

"Besides," put in Mr. Argent, "why did you not make it known to us before we found it out ourselves? That would have spoken much in your favor, young man."

"I will tell you, sir, frankly. I hoped to clear it up before it could be known, for my record here has been spotless and I was ashamed of this loss and hoped to make up for my fault by recovering the diamonds before they were missed."

"That won't do," objected the detective. "You have been spending money far in excess of your income, and have been keeping questionable company. The fact is, you have rushed into the pace that kills, and to keep it up you had to steal diamonds and convert them into cash."

"You are a liar!" cried the prisoner, hotly. "We have shown Mr. Argent proof for it, anyhow."

"You could not have any such proof, when nothing of the kind has been done."

"Our proof is the circumstantial evidence we have brought to bear. The diamonds missing, and you flush with money."

"I have been spending my own savings."

"That is not likely. What of the company you have been keeping?"

"It has been with a purpose. I have been trying to play the detective and so get evidence for an arrest."

"Ha, ha, ha! Why, Mr. Argent, he has been going it at a gay pace, and without any such thought or idea. And if innocent, what did he imagine he would gain by such a course?"

The prisoner was pale and excited, but tried to defend himself against his accusers.

Everybody in the store was looking on, and the proprietor realized that one thing or other must be done at once:—either he should take the man's word and free him, or accept the evidence the detectives had brought to bear and tell them to take him away.

He did the latter.

"Well," he said, "I am sorry for you, Terger, whether you are guilty or innocent. If you are innocent, you will have every opportunity to prove it. As it looks now, all the proof is against you, and I must have you held. Take him away."

With that he turned and made haste to get into his private office.

Again the prisoner broke down.

"If I could only see my wife first," he groaned. "If I could only be the first to tell her the whole story, I believe she would think me innocent in spite of all appearances, as I swear I am. Can't you take me home first, and then to the—the prison from there?"

"That is out of our line," was the response. "We don't mean to give you any chance to get away from us."

"I swear I will not try to get away."

"We'll not give you the chance."

Broadway Billy stepped forward.

"Are you the Prince Terger who lives at—?" mentioning street and number.

The prisoner looked at him quickly and inquiringly.

"Yes, I am," he answered.

"Well, I happen to be very slightly acquainted with your wife, Mr. Terger, and I will take it upon myself to send her any message you may desire to forward. You have only to tell me what."

"Who, sir, are you?"

"My name is Weston."

"Will you do what you say?"

"I will, sir, on my word."

"Well, tell my wife this: I am innocent. Whatever you hear, do not believe it. I am innocent, and I will explain everything to your satisfaction. You, at least, will believe me."

"Your wife shall have your message before she can hear of your arrest," Billy promised.

"Thank you. You are a stranger to me, but I feel that I can trust you and that you are my friend."

"Yes, you may trust me, sir; and, if you are innocent of this crime, as you claim to be, I may be able to help you."

"God grant that you may, sir."

"I will call and see you later on, and hear your story."

"See here, who are you, anyhow?" one of the detectives demanded.

"My name is William Weston, but I am somewhat better known as Broadway Billy."

This caused a little ripple of excitement, and the two detectives exchanged glances.

"Well," said one, "I hope the prisoner can be

cleared, but the way it looks now there is not much chance for him, I tell you."

The big policeman now led the prisoner out and away.

One of the detectives turned to Billy.

"You can't believe he's innocent, do you?" he asked.

"I can believe that just as readily as that he is guilty," Billy answered.

"Then you don't know about the case, eh?"

"No more than I have just now heard."

"When you hear all about it you may change your mind a good deal."

"Perhaps."

"Do you want to hear it?"

"Yes; anything in that line is of interest."

"Well, seeing that we are both in the same profession I'll tell you about it."

He took hold of Billy's arm in a familiar way and led him out, leaving the other detective behind.

"You see," the store detective said, as they passed toward the street, "it is a plain case. Diamonds have been stolen, and Terger is the man who lifted them."

"What's the proof?"

"Why, you heard me mention it."

"That isn't proof positive, though."

"Many a man has been hanged upon proof no better."

"The more shame for our country, then, I must say. I hold this man Terger to be innocent."

"Yet you haven't heard about the case."

"No matter; every man is innocent until you prove him guilty."

"And that's what we claim we have done in this case. It shows for itself."

"Well, tell me more and let me judge."

"You see, a pair of very valuable diamonds have been stolen, and a pair of paste ones left in their place. There is no way of telling just when this was done, but it was probably about four weeks ago, for since that time Terger has been going it at a lively gait."

"Well?"

"These diamonds were in his department. They were taken from the box by one of the clerks, that seems positive, and they were under Terger's charge. He is the only one upon whom suspicion has fallen, and the only one whose actions speak of guilt. All the others have stood watching. Terger has been in fast company and spending money in a lavish way."

"How much has he spent?"

"As high as twenty dollars of a night, and once even as much as thirty dollars."

"And how much salary has he been getting?"

"Twenty-four hundred a year."

"That does not make him a millionaire, by any means, yet a prudent man would save something out of it. He claims that it was his savings he was spending."

"Well, that's all right; but he can't account for the manner in which the diamonds were taken when they were certainly in his keeping and he was responsible for them. Mr. Argent discovered the paste ones by accident, or it might have been a secret yet."

"Terger has said why he kept it a secret."

"But it looks thin, don't you think so?"

"No, I don't; for this seems to be the first thing that has ever come up against him, and naturally he has felt sore about it and would want to keep it secret if there was a possible hope for his recovering the diamonds and restoring them."

"But, he wasn't making any effort. He was going to the dogs as fast as he could. You see, he was one of these modest young men who wouldn't say beans for a bagful, and they are just the ones who will stand watching."

"And in some cases will bear the watching well, too."

"But it didn't prove so in this case."

"From your point of view."

"Then you don't agree with me."

"No; he don't have the air of a guilty man."

"Oh! that he banged! You don't go by anything of that sort, do you? If you do you will get mistaken a good many times."

"Perhaps I shall, but I always give heed to my impressions in these matters, and I have been fairly successful, as maybe you will admit."

This the other had to admit, and after some further talk Billy broke away, with his belief in the innocence of Prince Terger not in the least shaken. If anything, it had been strengthened.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FRAGMENTS OF PAPER.

WHEN Broadway Billy returned to his office he found his two beagles there awaiting him.

"Hello, boys," he greeted, "you are back at last, are you?"

"You bet!" responded Happy Harry.

Silent Seth made no response.

"Well, where have you been?" Billy inquired.

"Been?" echoed Harry. "We've been scoutin' around after new game, that's where; and we've started it, too!"

"Is that so? But, tell me about the errand you were sent upon. I will hear your report first."

"Well, we followed His Nibs and found out that it was just as you thought. He's the man, sure."

"And he lives at that address?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is good. We will soon wind that case up, then. Now, what's new on the programme?"

"Well, we've scented one of the worst old diffikalties you ever hit upon in your career, and I'm bettin' rats to mice on it."

"That so? Well, let me hear particulars."

"Let the Philosopher tell you about it, boss; he can do it in quarter the words I can."

"Very well, Seth, you try it."

So, Silent Seth told briefly but fully just what had taken place, giving his own adventures in particular. Billy and Harry listened attentively.

"You're a corker, Seth, that's what you are!" cried Harry.

Broadway Billy remained silent and in a thoughtful mood.

"What do you think about it, boss?" Harry urged.

"Why, I am just trying to find out what I do think of it," answered Billy. "There is something important back of all this. But, Harry, tell me your part in full, and let me have the whole matter."

Harry gave his part of the tale.

"Let me see those scraps of paper you picked up at the stables," Billy requested.

"That's so," Harry exclaimed. "Was just going to get 'em out and see what I could make of 'em when we heard you comin'."

With that he went down into his pocket and brought the scraps to light, being particular to get them all, and put them on the desk in front of his employer.

"Now," said Billy, "while I am at this, Harry, I have an errand for you to do. It will not take you long, and by the time you get back we shall probably be able to let you read this puzzle."

Harry did not look pleased, but stood ready to obey orders.

"All right," he said, "just say what the business is and I'll be about it in the twink of a star or two."

"I want you to go to No. — — — street and ask for Mrs. Terger. She is a young woman with sad, blue eyes. You can't mistake her. Tell her I sent you and give her this message."

Billy wrote a brief note, and Happy Harry set out with it.

As soon as he was gone Billy went to work to match the tiny scraps of paper, to learn whether there was anything of importance there or not.

Gradually the paper grew into the form it had been originally, and when finally, after a considerable task, it was done, Billy was enabled to read the following message:

"GRACIE:—

"Yes, I will meet you at 5th ave. and 20th to-night at the same hour as before. Will then talk further about the matter. I am sure you will not disappoint me, and you need have no fear of my disappointing you."

"Faithfully yours,

"PRINCE."

"Ha! what have we here?" cried Billy.

Silent Seth had been looking on while Billy was arranging the paper, and now he read it, too, but said nothing.

Billy was interested in the signature.

The name Prince was by no means a common one, and might this not be the man of that name whom he had seen arrested so recently?

Wetting a sheet of paper, Billy pressed it down upon the fragments as they lay in order, and lifting it with care, every piece came up with it and he was enabled to turn it over without displacing one.

Next he took another sheet and gummed it well with mucilage. This he pressed down upon the back of the scraps, as they lay face downward upon the other paper, and in a few moments he lifted this one away from the other and the scraps came with it, all neatly pasted—an operation which Silent Seth watched closely.

"When you have a case of that kind you will know how to manage it, Seth," Billy remarked.

"Now, you see, I can preserve this thing, and

can compare it with the writing of suspected persons to find out *who* wrote it. This simple note may play a big part in this case. And I believe there is a case here, and not a small one, either. We may have work to do, my lad, that will task all our detective skill."

"Yes, sir; I begin to think so."

"And now, while Harry is absent, I am going to make one effort to compare it with the writing of a certain man. You keep the office until I come back."

Billy went out and hurried to the office of Aurum and Argent.

He asked to see Mr. Argent.

"Will you show me a specimen of the writing of Prince Terger, the man who was arrested here a short while ago?" he requested.

"Who are you?" Mr. Argent demanded.

"My name is Weston, sir. I am a detective. I am on the police detective force as well as being a private detective."

"And why do you make this request?"

"Because I want to compare it with a bit of writing that has come into my hands."

"Well, I would oblige you, but there is nothing of his writing here, save some brief entries on the books here and there. I do not think that would answer your purpose."

"It might not; but, Mr. Terger has served with you a number of years, has he not?"

"Yes, so he has."

"And you would recognize his writing anywhere?"

"I might be able to recognize it, sir; I will not say positively as to that. Let me see it."

Billy allowed him to take the paper and examine it.

"This has the appearance of having been reduced to pretty fine pieces and restored again," the man observed.

"You are right, sir. That is the case."

"Well, I feel pretty sure it is Terger's writing; it looks very much like it."

"Thank you," and Billy folded the paper and returned it to his pocket.

"May I ask you what you are looking up?" asked Mr. Argent. "Has that young man been up to some other evil deeds?"

"Not that I am aware of, sir," was Billy's response. "I am taking interest in this matter in the hope that I may be able to clear him of the charge that has been made against him."

"Indeed? Then you think he is not guilty?"

"I have some reason to think he may be innocent."

"You don't say! Well, young man, if you could prove him innocent I should like it—amazingly."

"This is the first time he has ever been suspected, eh?"

"The very first."

"Are you willing to tell me all you can about the matter?"

"Most willing, sir, if it will help you."

The gentleman went ahead, then, telling Billy all the private detective had previously told him, as quoted.

"And you say these diamonds, the paste diamonds, were exact imitations of the genuine?"

"Oh, no; but they were near enough in size and appearance to deceive any one at a cursory glance."

"And they were in the same box in which the genuine had been kept, and were similarly mounted in all respects?"

"The mounting was like the stones; a good enough imitation to deceive at first glance. All the more suspicion against Terger."

"And why?"

"Because, the person who made the exchange is a jeweler. Terger knows the trade. Then, he is the only person who had the handling of the goods in that particular section."

"Ground for suspicion, I admit, but not proof positive. Now, sir, there is no other person whom you might suspect, is there?"

"No one. We have considered every employee above suspicion; otherwise they would not have remained here."

"I see. Now, what explanation does Terger give?"

"He has given none, yet."

"And perhaps is unable to give any."

"Which makes it look still the darker for him."

"I admit it; but, you know the excuse he made at the time of his arrest?"

"Yes, but I fear it was a poor one. He should have told me of the loss at once, sir; at once."

"I agree with you there; but, he may have had hopes of recovering the gems, when he would have told you all about it."

"Possibly, possibly; but it looks bad for him. He has been spending money with a lavish hand,

and has been in bad company, according to what our detectives report. Still, sir, if you see any chance to prove him innocent, do so, and you shall be well rewarded. I had rather see him innocent than guilty, far rather. Yes, help him all you can, Mr. Weston."

CHAPTER VII.

THE CASE GROWS BROADER.

BROADWAY BILLY and the diamond merchant conversed for some time longer, when Billy took his leave and returned to the office.

Harry came in a little later on, and was more than eager to see what his chief had been able to make out of the scraps of paper he had gathered up at the livery stable.

"What did it prove to be?" Harry asked. "Was it a love billy-doo? Or was it a tailor's bill? Or meebty it was only a gentle hint from somebody's wash-woman. I seem ter ferget, though, that it's s'posed a woman had it an' tore it up. It's all the same in Dutch."

"Here it is, Harry," said Billy. "Read it and then pass your opinion on it for the benefit of the Co."

Harry took the note and read it.

"Jumpin' Jew's-harps!" he exclaimed.

"What is it?" Billy inquired.

Silent Seth merely looked on and listened.

"Why, if that woman's name is Gracie, then it proves that she has more bows to her fiddle than one."

"You mean strings to her bow."

"Somethin' like that. She's in the habit of meetin' her Prince by moonlight alone, and if we was in the divorce trade here we might work up a case for His Nibs, Cuthbert."

"We are not in that line, however, Harry."

"You bet. When this combination takes a case it's got to be one that means something. Hey, Philosopher?"

Silent Seth merely smiled his approval.

"Well, boys," said Billy, "this case is yours, so to say, and you must be at work on it. Harry, you go to the Cuthbert residence and watch for developments there, while Seth goes to the — Hotel and looks after Mr. Underboy. By the way, Harry, you have not reported what Mrs. Terger had to say."

"That's so. Well, she was cut up when she found her hubby might not be home for several days, but when I s'ured her it was all right, and that you had sent the note in your own handwriting, then she wiped away her tears, and said she'd try to grin an' bear it, or words to that effect."

"About the only thing she can do. I hope she won't find out about Terger's arrest till he gets bailed out, anyhow."

"Terger in the jug?"

"Yes. I must tell you about that side of the matter, so you will be the better prepared to judge of the value of anything that may come your way."

And so Billy did, giving his helpers a full understanding of the case all around.

"What did I tell ye, Seth?" cried Harry.

"Didn't I say there was a consarned diffikilty a-brewin'? Didn't I say there was a son o' Ham in the fence? I was sure of it when we sighted the game."

Seth nodded.

After some further talk and arranging of plans, the two boys set out.

They had not been gone long when the door opened, and in came Billy's friend and patron, the inspector.

Another man was with him, whom, as soon as he had greeted Billy himself, the inspector introduced as Mr. Jasper, of the firm of Jasper & Joyce.

Billy immediately recognized the name of one of the leading diamond houses of the metropolis.

"Verily," he thought, "diamonds seem to be trumps this deal."

"Mr. Jasper has brought a case to me," said the inspector, "and as most of my men are engaged I thought of you and want you to take hold of it for me and do the best you can with it. Are you busy?"

"Not too busy to try it, I guess," answered Billy.

"Very well. Mr. Jasper, this is the young man I named, and you may trust him fully. Shall I state the case to him, or will you do so?"

"You state it," said Mr. Jasper.

"All right. Well, Billy, it may be a difficult case, and possibly an impossible one, owing to the lack of any clew. Still, you may be able to hunt up a clew by a little sharp looking around. You will see how it stands as soon as you have heard about it, however. No need for me to give you hints at all."

"The more the better, from you," declared Billy.

"Mr. Jasper has been robbed of two valuable diamonds to-day, in a very artful and clever manner. This morning a woman entered his store and purchased a diamond ring. After making the purchase and paying for it—one hundred and ten dollars was the price—she asked to see some earrings. They were shown to her, and she examined several pairs, taking note of the prices, saying she might be able to purchase at no distant day."

"Finally thanking the clerk, she took her leave, and was seen no more. Her name had not been learned, nor is the clerk able to describe her very clearly. She was a young woman, and according to the clerk's estimate, pretty. She was dark, wore a small hat, and had on no wrap of any kind. That is about the extent of the description he can give, and there are thousands of women in New York whom it will fit. You see you are without a clew unless you can find the particular young woman who visited the store this morning."

"I see, sir."

"A rather difficult undertaking."

"It looks so."

"But you will try it?"

"Oh, yes; I'll tackle it. Luck is quite often on my side, you know."

Broadway Billy may be excused for not showing his hand. He believed he had the case more than half-worked out already, but to tell Mr. Jasper so would be to weaken the impression his success would produce.

He thought all this over while the story was being told.

The inspector resumed:

"It was some time later when the clerk who had waited upon the young woman had occasion to display the same diamonds again, and in opening one of the cases he noted that the diamonds looked rather duller than they had looked before, and this led to a closer inspection. He found they were only paste! It is believed that the young woman carefully, quickly and cleverly made an exchange while looking at the gems, and that she carried the genuine ones off with her."

"How much were these diamonds worth, Mr. Jasper?" asked Billy.

"They were on sale at five thousand dollars," was the answer.

"What value did you set upon them?"

"Well, say four thousand."

"Can you furnish me with an exact description of them?"

"Fortunately I can, sir. Here it is, just as I copied it from a card in the store before I went to see the inspector."

"Will you allow me to take it?"

"To be sure."

"I shall need it, you know, to prove the diamonds."

The inspector was paying attention, noting Broadway Billy's questions and no doubt weighing them.

"Certainly you will," responded the dealer, answering Billy's remark. "Take it and keep it with you, and I hope you will have success."

"Is this the first case of the kind you have had, sir?"

"Yes, this is the first."

"You have not brought the paste diamonds with you, have you?"

"No. I did intend to, but at the moment of my coming out it slipped my mind. You can see them by stepping into the store, however."

"I may do that. Your loss is similar to one which Aurum and Argent have just discovered."

"Ha! they have been visited too, have they?"

"Then you have not heard?"

"No."

"They met with their loss quite some time ago, but did not know it till very recently. They suspect one of their clerks, and have had him arrested on suspicion and upon evidence their detectives have gleaned."

"Mr. Jasper thinks his clerks are above suspicion," here put in the inspector.

"Yes, entirely so," the merchant supported.

"And I am of the opinion that it is so in the other case," Billy declared. "This case of yours, Mr. Jasper, will have weight toward clearing the suspected young man."

"There were paste diamonds there, too?"

"Yes."

"Then it has no doubt been the same person who swindled me. Something must be done to bring the thing to a stop."

"Something will be done, with Broadway Billy on the case," remarked the inspector, confidently.

They took their leave, and Broadway Billy

ed the office and went out, to make his way immediately to the diamond store of Archer and Race.

This was the place where Silent Seth had seen Warton Underboy transact some business, and from where he had afterward followed him to the bank.

Going in, Billy happened to address the superintendent of the salesroom at once.

"I want to see the head of the establishment," Billy said.

"You may state your business to me, sir; I am superintendent."

"Very well. You bought two diamonds this morning from a stranger."

"We do buy diamonds occasionally, sir, that way. What about this case?"

"I have reason to believe these diamonds were stolen, and have come in to tell you."

Now the man showed interest.

"Who are you?" he asked. "What do you know about the matter? How do you know they were stolen? You will have to explain fully."

"I am willing to do that. In the first place I am a detective. Next, I am tracing a pair of lost diamonds—rather, stolen. I have reason to believe that I have traced them here."

"Can you describe them?"

"I can, and very minutely. Look at this."

The man took the card, and after looking at it, said:

"Just come into the office with me, and we will see Mr. Archer about it. I am afraid you have not made any mistake. Come right this way, if you please."

CHAPTER VIII.

CONSIDERED PRETTY QUICK WORK.

BROADWAY BILLY followed the superintendent into the office, where he was introduced to Mr. Archer, one of the proprietors, the same one who had bought the diamonds from Warton Underboy.

"A detective, do you say?" that gentleman partly exclaimed, when Billy's profession was made known.

"Yes, sir," Billy made answer. "I have called to inquire about a pair of diamonds you bought this morning."

"And what about them?"

"They were stolen."

"What?"

"Stolen, I said."

"Impossible! Why, the gentleman bought them in London six years ago!"

"It would have been as easy for him to have said they were bought in Paris twelve years ago. Did he show you any bill of sale for them?"

"Well, no; but he offered good references."

"Easy enough to do that, too. Did you investigate before buying?"

"Why, no; we did not; everything seemed to be so straight that there was no suspicion aroused."

"That was bad. Now, can these diamonds be recognized as the stolen ones for which I am in search, if I give you the exact description? I have never seen the diamonds myself."

"Yes, if your description is very accurate, they may be."

"Well, here it is."

Billy passed the written description to him, and Mr. Archer compared it with the card his man Smithson had made out.

And as he compared them his face became serious and then clouded.

"I see there is reason to believe they are the same diamonds," remarked Billy.

"You see too much," the old gentleman snapped.

"And that, together with the clew that led me here," Billy added, "gives me proof enough that they are the same."

"Well, supposing they are, I have paid four thousand dollars for them, and I must have my money back somehow, or I must hold fast to the gems."

"You cannot hold the stolen goods; that is out of the question," Billy reminded.

"And why not, young man?"

"Because they still belong to the man from whom they were stolen."

"Well, I must have my money back, then."

"Perhaps you can find the rascal who sold them to you, and so get it out of him."

"I must try it, I suppose."

"I'll tell you what my idea is," offered Billy.

"What is it?"

"You hold the diamonds for the present. I am on the fellow's track, and if I get hold of him, I may be able to get hold of your money, or most of it, at the same time. If I can do that, you will not be out anything."

"Will you try it?"

"Of course."

"May I ask whom these diamonds were stolen from?"

"From Jasper and Joyce, sir."

"You don't tell me so! When were they stolen?"

"Not twenty minutes before you bought them, sir."

"Impossible!"

"Quite the fact, however."

"And that sleek rascal was the thief?"

"No; the thief was a woman, who immediately put the diamonds in his hands. He took them from their box, tore them from their setting, and came right here with them to get rid of them as soon as possible."

"The scoundrel! I'll send the police after him at once!"

"No, do not do that; I will attend to him. Tell me the name and address he gave you."

"He said his name was Warton Underboy, and that he was stopping at the — Hotel. Gave good references there, and—"

He stopped short and was thoughtful.

"What have you thought of?" asked Billy.

"I was thinking that you must be mistaken, young man."

"After the proof I have shown you? There is little chance for a mistake, Mr. Archer."

"But, he took my check willingly, saying he could get some one at the hotel to identify him, and— Ha! maybe he has not cashed the check yet!"

"Too late to stop that," said the superintendent.

"How do you know?"

"Because I sent a man to the bank with him from here."

"The dickins! What did you do that for?"

"To save him time and trouble. I thought him honest, the same as you did, and so obliged him."

"Well, I can't blame you, of course. There is only one hope, then, and that is in trusting the whole matter to you, young man."

"I will undertake to recover the money for you if it is possible," Billy assured.

"Go ahead, then, and do it."

"It is on the condition, however, that you do not part with the diamonds, for I shall hold you responsible for them."

"You talk pretty emphatic for so young a man, my son."

"Your son, as you call me, means business," Billy assured, with a smile.

"Well, I will hold the diamonds, and shall be all the more willing to give them up if you can bring my four thousand dollars with you, sir."

"I shall endeavor to do so."

Having gained the object of his visit, Billy took his leave, going from there straight to the — Hotel.

His object was to find and arrest the man Warton Underboy.

Arriving there, he looked about for Silent Seth, but the boy was not to be seen.

Billy went to the office and interviewed the clerk.

"Have you a guest here named Underboy?" he asked.

"We had such a man here," was the answer, "but he left about noon."

"Can you tell me where he was going?"

"No, sir."

"Where was he from?"

"Gave his residence as New York, sir."

"How long was he here?"

"Came only yesterday afternoon."

"Quick work, then. His little scheme was all laid."

"What was all laid? What do you mean?"

"That fellow was a swindler, and I am looking for him with a pair of bracelets his size."

"The deuce you say! He didn't look it."

"Looks don't always count, you know. You have a boarder here named Shield, I believe."

"Yes; but you don't want to class him as a rascal."

"I'm not going to. Was this fellow Underboy acquainted with him?"

"I guess not. Didn't see them speak. Mr. Shield has been here for years. This hotel is his home."

"So I thought. The rascal has been using his name, and I had my doubts about his knowing him. The proof is strong enough now."

"Hasn't forged his name, has he?"

"No, not that; merely referred to him for identity, and so consummated another bit of rascality."

Billy waited around a little while in the hope of seeing Silent Seth, but on reflection he saw that was useless, so set out in another direction.

From the hotel he dropped around to headquarters, where he was welcomed, as ever.

"What's the word?" asked the inspector.

"I have found Mr. Jasper's diamonds."

"What?"

Billy smiled.

"You don't mean to say you have found those lost diamonds already, Billy Weston?"

"Yes, sir; I do. I have put my hand on them the first crack. They are in the possession of Archer and Race, who bought them this morning not twenty minutes after they had been stolen."

"It don't seem possible that you could get sight of them so soon. I want to know how you did it."

"Dumb luck, as usual."

"I don't believe it."

"Why?"

"Everything is not luck in this business."

"Well, I can't claim any of the credit for myself, anyhow. Those two boys of mine picked up the clew."

"Then you knew something about it when I was at your office."

Billy had to admit that the guess was correct.

"You are right," he said, "and I would have told you then had it not been for letting Mr. Jasper into the secret too soon. I'll tell you all about it now."

So, Billy went ahead and laid the matter before his friend.

"You have struck it rich, Billy," was the remark when he had done. "This is going to pan out bigger than perhaps you think it will. You want to take care they do not get on your track like the Russians did."

"Can't help it if they do, sir. I must find Underboy, now, and when I have made sure of him I'll go for the rest of them."

"How are you going to prove it against the woman?"

"My boy can swear to what he saw."

"She'll deny it, and a dozen will prove an alibi for her. She can prove she was in that store where she bought the dress at almost the same hour. That clerk who wound her watch cannot forget the incident so quickly."

"I don't know but what you are right. Well, I'll have to get her to rights somehow. I guess I'll come at it in some way or other."

"You had better drop around and tell Jasper where his diamonds are. It will be quite a card for you."

This suited Billy's own ideas, so from headquarters he went to the store of Jasper and Joyce, where he amazed Mr. Jasper more than a little by telling him so soon where his stolen diamonds were. He was looked upon as a little more than human.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT HARRY LEARNED.

WHEN Silent Seth left the office, to carry out the instructions he had received, he lost no time in arriving at the hotel.

He was none too early. As he entered he saw his man, Warton Underboy, at the office paying his score, his grip on the floor at his feet.

Had Seth arrived a few minutes later he would have missed him. But, he was in time, and that was the important point. Little cared he for what might have been.

Seth caught sight of the porter who had answered his questions on the previous visit he had made.

This was not to his liking, for the colored gentleman caught sight of him at the same time, and came forward to speak.

"If you want to see Mistah Underboy, chile, you had better see him now, for he is gwine 'way. You asked 'bout him befo', as I remember fo' shua."

"I don't want to speak to him, though," Silent Seth declared in low tone.

He could have said more, but he let his actions finish for him, looking around as if in search of some particular personage.

Not finding him, evidently, he sauntered out, but he lingered not far from the entrance and waited for his man to make his appearance, and he had not long to tarry.

Underboy soon came out, his grip in hand, and went off up the street at a rapid pace.

Seth allowed him to get a proper distance, in advance, when he put himself in motion and followed like the Silent Shadower he was.

The man's final destination was the house to which Harry had previously followed the women in the carriage.

There he rung the bell, and he was recognized as soon as the door was opened and admitted without question.

Seth noted this, and passed on leisurely, won-

dering what he should do now to best advantage.

When he had gone a little distance he stopped and leaned against a lamp-post to reflect, at the same time keeping his eyes upon the house.

Whether the man would stay there, or whether he would soon reappear, the boy could not guess. The probabilities were about as much in favor of one course as the other.

After reflection Seth decided to watch.

To go and report would be to give Broadway Billy only the whereabouts of the man, and while he was gone the man might change his quarters.

An hour passed, and the man did not reappear.

The Silent Shadower had by this time decided that he meant to remain there.

After a time the boy noticed another man ascend the steps and ring the bell, one whom he had not seen before.

This man had passed the place where Seth was in considerable haste, and when Seth saw him spring up the steps and ring the bell he was all curiosity.

He had been wondering if there was not some means by which he might find an excuse for entering the house, but thus far had hit upon no plan. It was a dangerous business to undertake.

He wondered, too, where his chum, Harry, could be.

Billy had sent him to shadow this house, but Seth had been unable to see anything of him. It was plain that he was not there.

And the fact that he was not there led Seth to apprehend that something had happened to him. What it could be, however, the Silent Shadower could not imagine. He was at a loss to account for his absence.

While he was yet considering what to do, Harry came along.

He stopped where Seth stood, and said:

"What you doin' here, Seth?"

"Watching," was the brief answer.

"And what are ye watchin'?"

"House."

Seth pointed at the house upon which suspicion rested.

"Tell ye what it is, Seth," Harry complained, "I'm goin' to learn the deaf and dumb language and use that to talk with you. I'd get more out of ye that way than I can in plain English. Why don't ye rattle off the whole story at once and let me know what's what?"

"Didn't know you cared anything about it, Harry."

"Not care anything about it? Jumpin' Jew's-harps! do ye s'pose I'm one of them 'ar stoicks, like yourself? Not much. I'm a reg'lar double-headed interrogation p'int, I am, and you'd ought to know it by this time."

Seth nodded his head approvingly to that.

"Then if ye know it why don't ye satisfy the cravin' of my curiosity without makin' it necessary for me to use a triple-expansion force-pump, as it were? Why don't ye unload at once? What are ye watchin' the house for? What brings ye here? The boss sent me here; not you."

"You have been a good while getting here."

"Jumpin' Jew's-harps! What a long sentence for you to get off all at once, Seth. Wait a minute now before you speak again. Yes, I'm late gettin' here; reason why, I've been spottin' that fellow you just now saw enter the house. He's a bad one, he is, and he's onto our haze like a ton o' bricks. Broadway Billy is in danger, sure, and so are we."

Silent Seth was full of interest now.

His questioning eyes were fixed upon Harry, though he did not speak.

"Blame stoicks in general an' you in p'tic'lar!" cried Harry. "I do believe if I was to tell you Billy had been shot at and killed you would take it just as quiet like. You beat the bottle-bellied Dutch, you do, Seth."

Still the "Philosopher" held his peace.

Harry fretted around uneasily, but still did not allow his attention to be taken from the house; neither did Seth.

"Why don't you say somethin'?" Harry demanded. "Why don't you answer the questions I asked ye?"

"I was waiting for a chance," answered Seth. "I went to the hotel, as the boss ordered. Was just in time to see the man leaving. I followed. He came here and went into that house. I'm watching."

"See the waste o' breath you could 'a' saved me if you had only let that out right at once. You are going to worry me into a premاتور grave if you keep on, my silent partner. A petrified mummy from the land o' Nod could talk almost as much as you do, whether it had anything to say or not."

Seth, with nothing to say, said it.

"And now I s'pose you are in a fever to learn all I know, ain't ye?" Harry demanded.

Seth gave a shrug of the shoulders that might have been taken for utter indifference, or an invitation for Harry to suit his own pleasure.

"And if you ain't," Harry quickly added, "I'm jest a-dyin' to tell ye, and so here goes for it. Open your ears now, my deaf an' dumb Philosopher, and hear what I have to unfold."

Seth was giving attention.

"Well, you know you left the office ahead of me," Harry went on. "Not a great deal ahead, but you were the first out. Jest so. Well, when I went out I was in time to meet a man face to face who was star-gazin' at the signs down by the door. I paid no 'tention to him, but went on. I hadn't gone far, though, when the thought hit me on the think-box that mebbly that man wasn't there for any good, and I turned right about and went back, but on the opposite side of the street."

Harry paused to note the effect of his story on Seth, but Seth was as stoical as ever.

"I knew it wouldn't take long to wait ten minutes or so, you see," Harry went on, "and if there was anything crooked about the man it ought to crop out in that time, so I took the liberty to wait. And, lucky I did, for it has put us onto their game in fine style. That son o' Ham that's hidin' in the fence is bigger'n I thought he was at first, Seth; a good deal bigger. When I had got back, the man had satisfied himself about the signs, and was waitin' and watchin' outside the lower doors as if he wanted to shadow somebody."

"Well, pretty soon out comes our boss, and the fellow picked up his heels and ambled off after him in good shape. Then you bet the fever climbed up a degree or two in my veins, and I fell right in with the procession and followed the man that was following Billy. We did it right up in style, too. Jack was just as good as his boss, and I was t'other feller's Jack, sure 'nough. But crackers and cheese! I'm clear ahead of my story, Seth, and this part is 'portant—too much so to be slighted like that. Before Billy came out, who should come out but the inspector and another man. I s'pose they had gone in soon after I'd come out. See?"

Seth "saw," and nodded.

"Well, when the inspector appeared, my man sort o' drewed himself into himself so's not to be seen, and was mighty engaged in lookin' at things in the window, so the inspector and the man with him went off and didn't notice him. Now when I seen the inspector you bet I was interested for sure. I knowed then there was music in the air somewhere, and so when Billy came out and the other feller followed him, I was on his haze like a shyster onto a fat fee. And I stayed on, too, till I noled him here in this house. Selah!"

Never a word of comment from Seth. He simply listened, watching the house with unceasing vigilance.

"Why don't ye say somethin'?" Harry demanded. "Why don't ye slap me on the back and say 'Bully boy' or somethin' like that? But, you are a stoick, and stoicks don't do anything. Well, the man followed Billy and I followed the man, and Billy led us to the store of Archer and Race. That was where you tracked Underboy to, you savvy. The boss was in there quite a little time, and the man who had followed him waited outside. So did I. When Billy came out he tripped off lively and went straight to the — Hotel, the man after him, and me after the man. I could see by this time that our man was in earnest."

"You see, the boss had never a suspicion that any one was after him, and the man had never a suspicion that any one was after him; while as fer me, I had ter do some mighty artful dodgin', you bet, to keep out o' sight of both of 'em, specially Broadway Billy. Well, the man follered to the hotel, and when the boss left there and went to headquarters the man was after him still, hot as a cop after hot peanuts, and from there the chase led to the store of Jasper and Joyce, and from there back to our office, and there the man gave it up. But I didn't. I stuck to him like a copper to the peanuts aforesaid, and here I have holed him. Now, Silent Seth, what do ye think of it all? The jeebeeb bath spoken. Selah!"

"Danger."

Seth said much in one word.

"You are right; there's danger," agreed Happy Harry, "and the boss is in it right up to his chin. I tell you what, silent partner, it is for you and me to bustle and do something or there is going to be a circus on our front stoop."

CHAPTER X.

SILENT SETH'S STROKE.

HARRY had talked rapidly, and this time to a purpose.

He had done a good stroke of work, and while he was well aware of it, was in no wise boastful of what he had done.

Silent Seth had listened attentively, and his brief summing up had hit the nail right on the head. There was danger in the air, and more than a plenty of it, if appearances were to be trusted.

"What are we to do?" the silent partner now asked.

"Blest if I know what we are going to do," was Harry's response. "We are not getting there with any degree of soonness standing here."

Seth lifted his shoulders deprecatingly. He was aware of it. What more could they do than they were doing?

"What a blessin' it must be to have brains," Harry sighed. "They say hair and brains go together, and I am not by any means bald, yet I'll be chopped for sassage if I know where my brains are. Guess my tinpanium must be so thick that nothin' can get through it."

Seth was still aggravatingly silent.

"If you would only say somethin' it might put my ideas in workin' order," Harry complained. "If I was you I would hire out to a side show for a silent freak, a boy that never told a lie—because he finds it hard enough to tell the truth and tells mighty little of that. Don't get mad, Seth; I ain't. But, bend your mind to this big riddle and give me the answer."

The silent partner deigned to speak.

"We had better let Broadway Billy know what you have found out, as soon as possible," he suggested.

"Just the cheese, my Silent Shadower! It must be did. Let's draw lots to see who'll carry the news to Mary and who will remain here to watch the sharks."

"All right."

Harry tossed a penny, calling out heads, and heads it came down.

"Heads it is!" he cried; "so I'll go tell the boss what's what while you keep things straight here and don't get into no trouble. I'll be back again as soon as possible. We are onto them heavy, now, and we must bear down with all our strength. Selah!"

And, Happy Harry went off on his errand, whistling as he left the scene.

Meantime, nothing further had been seen of either man at the house, though while talking the boys had kept close watch in that direction.

Silent Seth had one great desire, and that was to get into the house and see what was to be learned there. He was willing to incur the danger for the sake of the prospect of learning something.

But, how?

While he was puzzling his brain with the question the way suddenly opened.

At any rate came a chance which he was quick to improve, and as it proved, it was just such a chance as he had dreamed about.

While he watched he saw a furniture van draw up and stop before the door of the house he was watching, and a young man sprung down and ran up the steps and pulled the bell.

Silent Seth moved nearer at once.

The man exchanged some words with the person who opened the door, and immediately sprung back to the van and began to unload something.

Silent Seth sauntered along and found the young man tugging away at a mattress which, while not heavy, was so unhandy that he found it difficult to get a good hold upon it.

"Want a lift?" asked Seth.

The young man dropped the mattress and looked up.

"Will you help me lug this thing into the house and up-stairs, boy?" he inquired.

"I will if there's a nickel in it," Seth answered.

"Grip on, then, and I'll give you that."

A woman was standing at the door, the same elderly woman he had seen that morning, and Seth did not want it to appear that he had an object in entering the house, and hence his ruse.

He lent his assistance promptly, and together he and the young man carried the mattress into the house, and up to the room for which it was intended.

There was little chance for Seth to hear anything, and he saw only the woman who had admitted them.

He could, though, get an idea of the interior, and he improved the opportunity to do that.

The mattress having been laid down, the two turned to go.

The woman had followed them up.

"Did you bring the other things?" she asked.

"What other things?"

"Why the chairs and the stand."

"No; nothing else was put on the wagon, ma'm."

The woman flew into a passion at once at that, and scolded roundly.

Silent Seth made his way out and down toward the street door, and looking back on reaching the next landing below he saw he was out of sight.

He looked about quickly.

At the rear of the hall was a curtain drawn across a doorway.

Springing to that he got behind it, and there he remained as silent as a mouse.

The woman kept up her scolding for some minutes, giving the van-driver little or no chance to explain or defend himself, and then Seth heard them coming down.

He was in a dangerous place, and knew it.

If discovered, he would be taken for a thief, and would be dealt with pretty severely before he could get clear.

He considered the game worth the risk, however, and was willing to take the chances. Meek and silent as he was, there was no braver boy in all New York, of his age.

The young man and the woman came down, passed along the hall, on down the next flight, and so on to the front door, the woman's tongue going all the time at a lively rate, and it was plain that he had been forgotten for the time being. He heard the door close.

"Now for it," he thought. "If it was Harry, he'd be better able to tackle it than I, for he has got more nerve; but I'll do the best I can."

The woman's steps died away along the hall, another door closed, and Silent Seth had the hall to himself.

He listened.

He could hear talking, but it was not on the floor where he was.

Stepping out with caution, he went to the stairs and leaned over to listen there.

Yes, the voices were below him, and if he would overhear anything of what was being said he must venture down.

It was risky. Discovery was likely to take place at any moment. Seth had no idea of backing out, however, and was not to be frightened off.

He descended to the lower hall.

As silently as a shadow he had moved, and at the foot of the stairs he paused to listen.

The voices came from toward the rear part of the hall.

The hall was not very light, and at the rear, as above, Seth noticed that a curtain was suspended before the door.

Moving to that curtain he drew it aside and got behind it to be out of sight for the moment while he decided upon further action.

He listened, hoping the voices were in that room, but they were not. There was another door only a little distance away, and he soon decided that the persons who were talking were in there.

The voices were those of men.

By listening carefully the boy soon made out other voices in another room, and this one was still further along the hall.

There were three doors in a row, about ten feet apart, and then this curtained door where the eavesdropper was in hiding. This room did not seem to be occupied.

With extreme caution Seth tried the door.

It opened to his touch, and he took a peep into the apartment.

The floor was bare, and there was not a single article of furniture to be seen. Here was safety for the present, for it was not likely, he reasoned, that any one would want to go into that room. So, closing the door again, he felt secure in his place behind the portiere.

CHAPTER XI.

HARRY ON THE JUMP.

UPON leaving the office of Jasper and Joyce, Broadway Billy returned to his office, and from there went home to supper.

Not finding anything from Harry or Seth at the office, he expected to meet them at the house if they had discovered anything of importance and could leave the game to come and report to him.

Billy had come to prize his two helpers more and more each day.

They were "game chickens," as he declared, and he was ready to pit them against any other pair the city could show.

His friend Channing, of the police, was ready to back all he claimed for the lads, while the inspector himself had great confidence in Broadway Billy and his "team of ponies."

It was while Billy was at supper that Harry came bounding in.

Billy saw at a glance that something unusual was in the wind, and was eager to learn what it was.

"What's up, Harry?" he asked.

"Jumpin' Jew's-harps! Boss, we have stirred up another nest o' hornets, as sure as you live."

"Another nest of hornets? What do you mean by that? What have you found out now? Come, let me have it all in few words."

"Couldn't begin to tell it in a few words no-how. Reckon you didn't know you was shadowed when you left the office and went to the hotel, and from there to Headquarters, and from there to the store of Jasper and Joyce, and from there back to the office, did you?"

"No; but I know now that you were on my track. What was that for?"

"'Cause there was a bad man with a wicked eye following you, and I wanted to see what he was up to."

"Hal that so?"

"You bet!"

"And you followed him, of course."

"Bet your ducats I did, boss; and I holed him, too."

"Where?"

"Same house where I left the two women. Oh! they are a pizen lot, that I tell you."

"Yes, I am aware of that, but we shall trip them up before they know it."

"If they don't trip us, you mean."

"We must take care they don't do that."

"But they are onto us now, heavy!"

"So it seems; but, forewarned is forearmed, and you have put me up to their trick. Have you seen Seth?"

"You bet. He shadowed his man to that same house too, and there he is like Patience on a monnymint, tryin' to bore holes through the front with them eyes o' his to see what's goin' on behind the scenes."

"Then this is just the time to bag them!" cried Billy.

"Goin' to scoop 'em?"

"Yes. We have got evidence enough to warrant the arrest, and I think we can hold 'em. Eat your supper and we'll be off."

"Don't believe I can eat a bit, boss. The fever is at such a height that it has taken away all my appetite. I'll take a bite, though, to please mom, and then we will go and yank the fur off the goat in grand style."

Billy's mother, however, saw to it that the boy ate while Roger Watts looked on approvingly, talking with Billy about the case on hand and offering his assistance in case his help was needed; and while they were still there Fatty-Skinny dropped in.

He was the Skinny of old, but so fat that he was no longer recognizable. He had some papers requiring Billy's signature.

"Hello! Fatty, my tender birdling, how are you?" Billy greeted. "You look as hearty as a porpoise. I s'pose you weigh yourself by the ton now, don't you?"

"You can't count my bones any more, that is sure," was the response. "You used to want to polish them up with oil and pumice so that I would reflect credit upon my worthy partner, yourself."

"But that day is past. If I were to talk to you like that now, you would put your foot on me, and then where would I be?"

"Great ginger!" as Fatty-Skinny looked at Happy Harry, "but that boy is yourself over again, Billy."

"He certainly is," declared Billy's mother.

"The only difference is that he has got more good sense and brains than I had at his age," Billy added.

"He would be an object of pity if he had any less," retorted Fatty-Skinny, with a grin. "What you didn't know, Billy, would fill a whole library, and more."

"Sweet pertaters! I guess you are right, Skinny."

The two old chums talked thus for a time, when Billy told Skinny about the case he had on hand, and finally they left the house together, Harry with them, when the ex-lean lieutenant left them and went home.

"Now for it," cried the really happy "Pony"—happy at thought of the round-up so near at hand.

"Yes, now for it," agreed Billy. "It upsets my plans a little, but we may as well make a clean job of it at one stroke."

"What was ye going to do?" asked Harry.

"You remember the note you found?"

"Sure."

"Well, I intended to keep the appointment and meet the woman in place of her Prince."

"That would have been a good joke."

"Yes, if she didn't happen to know he is locked up, as perhaps she does by this time. Still, I would have taken the chance of that. Just as well, though, if we can bag them all at once."

"You bet."

"Well, you go to the place and relieve Seth so he can get his supper, if he will go, and I'll go and get the warrants and the police. Keep shady, and I'll be on hand in a little while. If they move, follow them, of course."

"Sure."

They parted, then, each going a different way.

Happy Harry moved along at the double-quick, and ere long was back again in the neighborhood of the shadowed house.

As he turned a corner he met a sudden surprise, and it required all his nerve and presence of mind to keep from stopping short and letting out his pet exclamation.

He came face to face with Warton Underboy and another man, followed by Mrs. Cutbert and her mother, with yet another man bringing up the rear.

"Jumpin' Jew's-harps!" Harry said to himself, when he had passed them. "It is a reg'lar oxbodus out o' Jeejup, hang me for a sick kitten if it ain't! And where is Silent Seth?"

Harry looked eagerly, expecting to see the silent partner come into sight, but he looked in vain. Seth was nowhere to be seen.

"Crackers an' cheese!" the boy exclaimed, this time out aloud. "There is a son o' Ham in the fence, for sure, this time! Wonder if they have laid Seth out with a cracked head? Wish I could go and see, but I can't, for somebody has got to follow the game."

He had stopped, and was debating what to do, and it did not take him long to make up his mind.

It was plain that he must take up the trail.

Whatever had happened to Seth he must leave for Billy to find out upon his arrival at the house. There was nothing else he could do, much as he hated to think of Seth's probable need of immediate help.

"Business is business," he said to himself, as he wheeled into line and followed the suspected characters. "They have shaken Seth off the trail, somehow, but the other dog is here to take it up. We'll have you yet, my daisies, or I miss my guess by a yard and a quarter. When this combination gets started after crooked cases there has got to be a earthquake to stop it."

Harry had gone on a considerable distance after passing the men and women, and when he began to follow he was sufficiently far in the rear to escape observation, or at any rate to avoid being suspected.

Each of the party was carrying something, and all were dressed as if for travel.

The women had on linen dusters, and taking them all together, they had the appearance of having just arrived in the city, after a long journey by rail.

Happy Harry followed them to a hotel at some distance from their last abode, where he had the satisfaction of seeing them register, and, a little later on, he had an opportunity for looking at the Register, and learning their new names.

He felt that it was safe to leave them here for the present, since they were likely to remain all night at least, so he made haste to get back to the other house to learn something of the fate of Silent Seth.

It did not take him long to cover the ground. Arriving at the place, he sprang boldly up the steps and gave a tug at the bell-knob.

There was no response, and he had hardly expected any. He believed the prey had taken fright and had deserted the lair for good.

He tried the door, but it was fast, and immediately leaving the stoop he dodged around and down to the basement door and tried that. The result was the same there.

As he came out from there he saw the Irish girl next door.

She saw him at the same time, and grinned, while she inquired:

"Is it still lookin' fur infurmashun ye are about dhe Cutberts?"

"That same it is," answered Harry, imitating. "Phwere are dhey, onyhow?"

"Sure, dhey have gone off, dhe last wan av dhem, and wid bag and baggage along wid dhem, too."

"Then I guess it's no use my stayin' around

here. But, say, Nora, did you see anything of a boy here about my size, but not quite so good-lookin'?"

"And how did ye know me name was Nora?"

"I guessed at it, ye are so swate lookin', sure!"

"Then it is good at guessin' ye are, fur dhat is me name. No, Oi haven't seen anyt'ing av any b'y, not since dhe furnychure came dhis afternoon, whin a b'y helped dhe man carry in a mattress."

"That was him, peanuts to taffy it was!" cried Harry. And forthwith he rattled off an accurate description of Seth, the girl being able by it to assure him that it must have been Silent Seth she saw. Seth had gone into that house, and it was very probable that he was, in there still, either dead or alive. He must rescue him.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT HAPPENED TO SETH.

THE reader may desire to know what happened to Silent Seth meanwhile.

Let us return to him and learn what has taken place, for that something had happened was certain, to throw him off the track.

After finding that the room behind the curtain was vacant, as said, he felt quite at ease regarding his safety, feeling that behind the curtain he had a secure retreat.

He listened carefully for some moments without venturing forth.

The men's voices were louder than those of the women, but not loud enough for him to catch their words from where he stood.

Waiting until satisfied that no other person in the house was stirring, the boy slipped out and advanced stealthily to the first of the three doors, where he applied his ear to listen.

"Yes, curse him!" were the first words he caught. "One of the smartest detectives in all New York."

"And there is no doubt about his being on the right track, is there?"

"None at all."

"His going to the diamond store proves that, if nothing more."

"Yes, that's so."

"Well, what is going to be done about it?"

"One of two things—either get out or put out."

"That is to say—"

"We must either get out of the way or remove the detective."

"Don't seem to me there is but one thing to do," spoke up a third man, who had not spoken before.

"Why so?"

"Because, if he went to the police he no doubt told all he knew there. This fellow is one of the police spies, anyhow."

"That's so! Of course it is!"

"And if we have to drop the game just when we are getting in our fine work, we ought to have revenge for it somehow."

"That's so! Of course it is!"

"And it would be a good thing to rid New York of this young pest of a detective, so that honest men may have a chance to earn their bread by the sweat of their brows."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is a risk to run, though, for he is a devil in fact, in a fight."

"That's what they say, but he may prove tame enough when he meets a man who is not afraid of his name. I would tackle him."

"He can draw and shoot while the ordinary man is thinking about it, they say, and his aim is sure every time. You see, he was out West there and learned all the tricks they could teach him."

"Well, we'll teach him a few he has not learned yet, I guess."

The talk shifted then to matters in which Silent Seth had no interest, and the boy moved on to the next door to find out what the women were talking about.

"Yes, this is the biggest thing yet," the younger of the two was saying.

"And we must win it before we have to get out of the city," spoke the other. "The men are not in this, are they?"

"Elmer is."

"Why did you tell him?"

"He is so jealous, and followed me so much." "I would not have satisfied him, I assure you of that, my dear."

"Yes, you would, too. He might appear on the scene at just the wrong time and so spoil everything."

"Well, that's so."

"But knowing all about it, he will know why I meet the man and so will have sense enough to

keep away. No; we must not go away without making that stroke count for something."

"And yet we must look out sharp, from what Garvey has said."

"Yes; the judge knows what he is talking about, and when he is alarmed you can make up your mind there is danger sure enough."

"Then you are going to meet Prince to-night, are you?"

"I would not miss it for anything."

"Well, I don't blame you, for if you can get hold of a good fistful of those big diamonds it will fix us all right."

At that point Seth heard one of them move, and dodged back to his curtain in haste.

It was a false alarm, however, and he presently ventured forth again.

This time he stopped at the door of the room where the men were, to hear what they were talking about now.

"There is no question about that," one was saying.

"And we must be ready to pick up and leave here at a minute's notice, if the necessity compels."

"Yes."

"Is that detective alone? or has he a staff of men around him?"

"I have made some inquiry about him, and I find he has recently set up in the profession. He has no men, but employs a pair of smart boys."

"Boys?"

"Exactly—ponies fit for a circus."

"Bah! I guess we need not tremble, if boys are to be pitted against us in this game."

Two of the men laughed.

"They are, or were, regular street Arabs, like Broadway Billy was himself when he first attracted the notice of the police, and under his training you can bet they are corks."

"We'll cork them, if we get hold of them."

At that moment Silent Seth heard a scream in the hall, and he looked up with a start.

One of the women had stepped out of the room quietly, without any warning sound, and had discovered the boy at the door listening!

Like a flash Seth darted down the hall toward the door, but the woman put herself in the way and tried to stop him. It was the elder woman, and Seth did not mean to be stopped.

Lowering his head, he butted her, and over she went, while he sprung on toward the door.

He might have escaped, even though already the men were rushing out to see what all the screaming was about, but the woman grabbed him by the leg of his trousers and held fast.

Seth made no use of words, but he did of his free foot, giving the woman a kick on the knuckles that made her glad to let go.

But escape then was out of the question, for one of the men was upon him and he was nabbed.

"Who are you, boy?" the fellow demanded, roughly.

And as he put the question he shook Seth more roughly still.

"Please let me go, mister," Seth whined. "I won't do it no more."

"You won't do what any more? Speak out, before I shake the liver and lights out of you!"

"I didn't steal nothin' 'deed I didn't. I was put up to it, but I was too much afraid, and I only wanted to get out—"

"He lies, curse him!" cried the woman, in a rage that made her former anger with the van driver appear only a joke. "He's a spy, that's what he is!"

"A spy!"

"Yes; a spy. He was listenin' at the door."

"Yank him in here till we have a look at him," one of the men cried.

So, Seth was jerked along the hall to the room where the men had been in conversation, and the two women followed him in.

He recognized two of the men and both of the women.

The latter was Mrs. Cuthbert and the woman whom she called her mother.

The men were Warton Underboy and the man who had last entered the house, with one other whom Seth had not seen before.

"Now, boy, we want the truth out of you," cried one of the men.

"I have told the truth," Seth declared.

There was every necessity for his talking now, if he ever talked.

"You lie!" cried the man. "You came here as a spy, and we want to know who sent you."

"Ain't you the boy I saw at the — Hotel this afternoon?" demanded Cuthbert excitedly.

"Don't see how I can be," answered Seth.

If he fibbed, there was a good excuse for doing so. His life might be at stake, for all he knew.

"You lie, curse you! I did see you there, and you spoke to one of the colored porters. I didn't think anything about it then, but now I do, and I'll bet you followed me here."

"Then he's one of that accursed detective's ponies!"

"Of course he is!"

"And no telling how soon the whole police force will be after us!"

Seth was looking from one to the other in the most bewildered way imaginable.

He did not appear frightened, and his acting was perfect. What was being said was apparently all Latin to him, so far as getting at the meaning was concerned.

Such, however, was not the fact of the case at all. He realized only too well what it meant, and the danger he was in. If they could prove that he was one of Broadway Billy's ferrets, they would probably kill him.

"Boy, who are you?" his captor demanded yet more fiercely.

"Please don't have me locked up, mister," Seth whined. "Please don't do it, I beg of you."

"There's no time to argue the point with him," cried Underboy. "We must get out of here at once. Tie him up and we'll dispose of him in short order."

Seth made another effort to escape, but it was useless, and all three laying hold upon him he was soon bound and helpless in their power. One suggested killing him, but to that the women objected.

Instead, he was carried down to the rear basement cellar, where he was tossed in altogether regardless of his feelings, and the door was closed upon him. And in a very short time afterward the Silent Shadower heard them leaving the house and heard the big front door close after them with a slam.

CHAPTER XIII.

HARRY TO THE RESCUE.

WHILE Happy Harry was talking with the Irish girl, as we left him at the close of a preceding chapter, a policeman came sauntering along twirling his club in that inimitable style which only The Finest have brought to perfection.

The policeman stopped and looked at Harry searchingly, and from him to the girl.

"What have ye here, Nora?" he asked, pointing with his club.

"Sure, he's a foine b'y," was the response.

"He looks like it. I took him for a hallway sneak, and I t'ought maybe ye wanted to run him in."

"See here, copper," spoke up Harry, "I once knowed a man that died of swellin' of the brain brought about by too much smartness. Is your insurance all paid up to date?"

"Don't ye give me none o' your guff," the officer growled.

"That's what a feller gets for takin' a friendly interest in his feller-men, every time. Next time I give you a tip you'll know it."

"What are ye doin' here, anyhow?"

"That's just what I want to tell ye, if you will give me a chance."

"This is your chance, then. Seems to me you don't need for cheek and chin, whoever ye are."

"I have been told that same thing so often that I begin to believe it myself, old boss. But, that ain't to the p'int. Have you ever heard of Broadway Billy?"

"Sure. Every body has heard of him."

"Well, I am one of his cubs."

"Get out!"

"Fact."

"What's your name?"

"They call me Happy Harry."

"Sure ye ain't tryin' to kid me?"

"I'm givin' it to ye as straight as a stick."

"And what are ye doing around here? What are ye up to, anyhow?"

"The fact of the business is, Dennis—"

"How did ye know me name was Dennis?"

"Oh! I guessed at it."

"It's dhe devil at guessin' he is," here put in the Irish girl.

It seemed that Harry had been lucky enough to hit the officer's name at the first fire.

"Well, go on with your story," the policeman urged. "What is dhe fact of the business, as ye started to tell me?"

"It is just this: We have been after a lot of p'izen buzzards, and they were here in this house. My silent partner, Silent Seth, was here to watch them. Now they are gone."

"Well, what of that?"

"Just this much of it: Silent Seth is missing, and Nora here thinks he went into the house. If he did, he didn't come out again, and I'm afraid they have done away with him. That is the long and the short of it all in a lump. Will you help me bust in and search the den?"

"Can't do it without a warrant, boy. I'd get into trouble if I did."

"But, my poor deaf an' dumb pard may be dyin' this minnit."

"Too bad fur him, but Oi can't break in."

"Then what good are ye? What's the use of havin' policemen, if citizens can't make use of them when they want to? I tell ye Silent Seth may be about croakin' his last croak, and here we stand not doin' a thing to save him."

"Are ye sure he is in there?"

"As sure as I can be. If he wasn't he would have follered the buzzards when they took flight, which he didn't."

"Well, you had better hustle and find your boss, if your are what you claim to be, and let him come here with a warrant, then we'll make short work of it."

"He's comin' here as soon as he can get here, with warrants for the arrest of the birds that's gone, but Seth may be dead by that time. I tell you somethin' has got to be did."

"Well, I haven't the 'tority to break in, and I can't do it. You will have to be gettin' av a warrant, me lad."

"Anyhow, you can come to the rear and see if we can hear Seth, can't ye?"

"And how would ye get to the rear?"

"Nora here will let us through this house, and we'll scale the fence. Mind you, there is a suspicion of foul play, and it will be a feather in your hat if you are the first to get onto it."

"I suppose I can do that and not overreach me 'tority. Will ye let us go t'rough, Nora?"

"Sure, Dennis, it is yerself dhat is a policeman, isn't it? And av ye will go t'rough ye will dhat same, won't ye?"

"I suppose so, but it was out ov politeness I asked ye."

"Dhen it is out ov politeness dhat Oi say come along wid ye and Oi'll show ye t'rough."

Happy Harry had carried one point, and the three entered the basement of the adjoining house and passed through to the yard in the rear.

Here a high board fence separated the two yards.

"Give me your foot, Denny," Harry invited, "and I'll boost ye over. Then Nora can boost me, seein' that I'm the lightest."

"Over I go, then," the officer cried, the vision of a sergeant's badge possibly filling his mind's eye.

He gave his foot, and Harry sent him to the top of the fence with little effort.

When he had dropped over, the girl helped Harry.

About the time Harry went over, a female voice from one of the windows demanded sharply to know what was going on, and while the Irish girl offered her explanations, Harry and the officer began their search.

The rear of the house was provided with a stoop, with an exit door under it, and two very narrow windows admitted light into the rear cellar.

These windows were fitted with iron bars, but at one of them a pane of glass was wanting.

"That's the cellar, I'll bet," said Harry.

"I tink it is," agreed the officer.

"And if he is alive he is in there, maybe."

"It is very like he is."

"I'll see."

Harry sprung to the window, stooped down by it, and putting his face close to the bars, called out:

"Hello, Seth?"

A groan was the response.

"Here he is, sure enough!" Harry cried. "Is it you, Seth?"

Two groans were the response to the question, and Harry was almost beside himself.

"That's him, Denny; that's him, sure!" he cried. "Now you have the right to break in, for you know something is wrong inside. You'll be a sergeant the first you know, see if you don't."

"Yes, I have the 'tority now, lad, and we'll see what's been goin' on here or know dhe reason why. We'll try the dure."

The officer led the way and tried the door under the stoop.

It was fast, but evidently with only a single bolt, and a heavy blow with his broad shoulder sent the door open.

In they went, then, and in a few moments more had found the way that led into the rear

cellar, where they found Silent Seth bound and gagged on the floor as he had been left.

Harry sprung at once to the release of his partner.

"Are you hurt much?" he asked.

"No," was the brief response.

"Lucky they left you alive. They slipped up on you that time in bad shape."

"Yes; and what's worse, they have got away," Seth remarked in a tone of keen regret.

"Not by a good deal they didn't!" asserted Harry. "I got onto their haze and I have holed them in their new quarters, you bet!"

Seth brightened up at once.

The prisoner had by this time been freed, and was led out into the light.

He was as good as ever, except for some scratches and bruises, and was eager to take up the work anew.

"What did ye learn?" Harry asked.

"I learned that they are after the boss, and that's enough," was the response.

"But they won't get him, for I have put him up to what is going on. He is coming here as soon as he can to pull them in."

"Too bad they got away, and it was all my fault, too. I ought to have known better than to venture in here. I wanted to learn all I could, though, and I took the chances."

"My! what a speech for you!" cried Harry, holding up his hands in amazement.

Seth acted as if he was somewhat surprised at it himself, and lapsed into silence as though he meant to make up for it at once.

Harry was about to ply him with questions, but just then came a ring at the bell.

"I'll bet that's the boss now," Harry exclaimed.

"Come on, Seth, and we'll give him a surprise."

The ring had been sharp, and while the two boys and the officer were hastening up to respond to it there came another that was sharper still.

When the three reached the upper hall, Harry sprung forward and opened the door.

There was Broadway Billy, and three policemen with him.

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy cried, letting out his old-time exclamation in his surprise; "what's the meaning of this?"

"It means the game has got out and hunted a new hole," explained Harry.

"Is that so? Had they gone when you got here?"

"I was just in time to see 'em, and you bet I put myself in motion to track them to their new den."

"Good for you! Where have you been, Seth?"

"A prisoner in the cellar."

"Ha! then they nabbed you, did they? Lucky you didn't get used worse than that. But, tell me everything, both of you."

Thereupon the boys told each his story, Harry first and Seth next, and thus Billy was put in possession of the newest developments in the case. It looked as if there was going to be a severe battle before the end came, unless they could be taken by surprise at the hotel where they had taken temporary refuge.

CHAPTER XIV.

LIVELY ALL AROUND.

WHEN Broadway Billy had heard all the two boys had to tell him he quickly decided upon his course of action.

He would go and see the prisoner, Prince Terger, get all the information out of him he could, and then be on hand to keep the appointment with Mrs. Cuthbert in his stead.

By so doing, he might be able to bring to light further rascally work; but at any rate he would add weight to the evidence he had against the guilty ones. This seemed to him as about the proper step now to take; so, leaving one officer to stand guard over the house, he dismissed the others and he and his two "poules" went off together.

"Well, what's the lay, now, boss?" asked Harry.

Billy answered:

"You and Seth must go and keep watch at that hotel, that's the first step."

"They'll recognize him, though," Harry reminded.

"Lend him a mustache, then."

"I thought of that soon's I'd let out the words."

"And there you must be prepared for anything that turns up. If they make another move, don't fail to follow and keep on their track," and Billy then fully explained his plan.

They parted, the boys eager to execute orders and thus accredit themselves in their master's

service and counting also upon the fun to come when the game was bagged.

Meanwhile something else had been taking place.

After settling at the hotel under other names, the rascally crew held a consultation as to what should be done.

It was then that Mrs. Cuthbert made known her scheme in full with regard to meeting Prince Terger—for he was the person from whom she had received the note.

That was agreed to, but it was known that now the matter would have to be handled with extreme caution, since suspicions had been aroused and the police were upon their track.

One of the men proposed going back to the house just deserted, to see whether or not a raid was made upon it. If not, then it might be safe to assume that the detectives had not found them out yet, in spite of the capture of the boy.

This was hailed as a good idea, and one of the men set out.

It was the one who had shadowed Billy and whom Harry had shadowed in turn.

He was a hard-visaged customer, one who looked evil enough to commit any crime, and he was known as "Judge" Gravey. He was called "The Judge."

When he reached the place he was just in time to see the raid by the officers, under the charge of Broadway Billy, in person, so the scamp took good care not to let himself be seen while danger abounded.

He watched with all the caution of a veteran detective, and when finally Billy and the boys parted he followed the young Hawkshaw chief.

Neither Billy nor the boys had seen him.

The boys proceeded to the hotel, where, by a little careful work, they found their prey was still there—all except this man, and there they took up their vigil.

Billy Weston went on to the prison where Prince Terger was, or had been, imprisoned.

"Can I see Prince Terger, the young man who was locked up this afternoon?"

"Don't think you can, unless you can find him," was the answer. "He was let out on bail an hour ago."

"My brains will never save my feet," declared Billy. "I might have known it if I had given any thought to it. I presume I can find him, but now I won't have time."

He consulted his watch as he took his leave. It would be impossible for him to keep the appointment if he went now to the young man's residence, so he decided to be on hand for the appointment, to learn what he could from the woman, in case he could make sure of her and get her to talk with him on some pretext or other.

From the prison he went to his office, where he assumed a disguise which he thought might serve his purpose.

Having seen Prince Terger, and heard him speak, he believed he could pass for him in the night long enough to learn something.

When he left the office he noticed a man loitering near the door, but gave him no more than a passing glance and went on his way toward the appointed place.

This man was the one who had been following him, and only a little time after Billy had passed out of sight he gave a start, looked in the direction he had gone, and struck himself savagely upon the breast.

"Fool!" he cried. "Fool that I am! Perhaps that was the detective in disguise! What else would bring him here, at this hour, if not to procure a disguise? By heavens! I'll find out."

He sprung up the stairs, found the door of Billy's office, and knocked.

There was no response, of course, and after knocking again the man dashed down the stairs two steps at a time and was off.

He did not stop until he had reached the hotel, where he was seen by Harry and Seth, who were lying low in wait for something to turn up.

Dashing up to one of the rooms, the man entered excitedly.

The other two, Underboy and Cuthbert, were there, as was the elder woman, who was known as Mrs. Mordaunt.

"Hello! What's the matter, Judge?" they asked.

"Matter enough," was the almost fierce response. "I have just made a fool of myself."

"How was that? That is something unusual for you to do, for you are generally wide enough awake."

"I'll tell you how it was. I went to the house, you know, and there I was just in time to see this infernal Broadway Billy and the police make their raid."

"The deuce you say!"

"Lucky for us we got out!"

"You bet!"

"Yes. Well, the door opened when they rung and there was another policeman with two boys, one being the one we left there a prisoner. It shows plain enough that they were hot on our tracks."

"So it does. Then you have had a sight of Billy Weston and both his young ferrets, have you?"

"Yes; and I'd know them anywhere, now; or at any rate I thought I would; but I have just seen how easy it is to be mistaken. I have allowed Broadway Billy to give me a dirty shake, and no mistake. He passed right under my nose in disguise and I never suspected him till it was too late."

"How was that?"

"I'll tell you. When they left the house, after finding that we had got away from them, I made up my mind to follow Broadway Billy. I knew we had given them the shake, and that we were safe enough, so I didn't think it important to pay any attention to the boys."

"Certainly not."

"And where do you think he led me?"

"Give it up, of course. Where was it to, Judge?"

"To the city prison!"

"Is it possible! Then there is new danger afoot."

"How so?"

"Why, we have heard that the young man, Prince Terger, the fellow Gracie has on the string, has been arrested and locked up, and if he has been to see him he has no doubt got further grounds to work upon."

"But, he didn't see him. He came away as soon as he had spoken to the jailer."

"It looks queer. But go on with your story."

"Well, from there he went to his office, and while I was waiting for him to appear again a stranger came down and went off. A few minutes later it struck me that maybe it was Billy in disguise, and to make sure I went up and tried the door. Sure enough, he was gone."

Just outside in the hall two youthful heads were pressed against the door.

Happy Harry and Silent Seth had come there by playing a clever trick.

Considering what plan they could work to hear what was being said, they had entered the house boldly, and had passed up to the hall where these rooms were.

Here they had turned out the gas, and were listening, taking all the risk of discovery, knowing they were not likely to meet any deadly peril; but trusting to their good luck and much pluck to escape detection at all.

"Then we have got to be up and doing," declared Underboy, whose voice the listeners recognized. "Kate has gone out to keep her appointment with Prince—had gone before we knew of his arrest, and if the detective can see the fellow first, they may take her in."

"That's so; and, by the same token, why won't this be a good chance to take him and give him a dose of his own medicine?"

"It will, by great guns!"

Harry and Seth waited to hear no more, but sprung to the stairs, down which they proceeded leisurely to the street.

They there posted themselves at a little distance apart and waited for what might be the outcome of what they had heard. The battle was growing warm all around, and they were in it.

The lads had had a hasty understanding that both were to follow, if all the men went together, and were to keep apart, so that if one happened to be discovered the other could still hang on the trail and track them to their destination.

As to remaining to watch the woman, they did not consider that necessary.

They had seen the other woman go out, but according to Billy's orders had paid no attention to her.

In the mean time Billy Weston had gone to the place of the appointed meeting, and was pacing up and down the avenue.

While he was thus engaged he saw Prince Terger coming up the avenue, and knew then that he had the prey in his own hands if he worked the case aright. The young man passed on, and Billy followed.

Not a great distance had they gone when Terger met a veiled woman, and the two stopped and shook hands. Billy passed right on, and slowly enough to catch some words, though not enough to put him onto the full meaning of the business that had brought them together.

Terger's appearance upon the scene had been

no surprise to him, for he had thought it probable, upon reflection, that he would be there, but he had hoped for a chance to talk with the woman himself.

CHAPTER XV.

A BATTLE IN REALITY.

WHAT Billy heard was, as said, brief, yet it was enough to reveal something to him, though not the full meaning.

"You have got me into serious trouble," he heard Terger saying.

"And how so?" the woman asked, in a tone sweet enough to do credit to an angel, almost.

"I have been arrested, and am only out now under heavy bonds," the young man made known further. "I'm accused of stealing them."

That was all Billy heard. He knew that what followed was some pretty plain talk, for Terger had begun in the right way to make it so.

Billy went on for a little distance, then turned a corner, stopping there and placing himself where he could see, even if he could not overhear.

Terger and the woman stood for some moments, talking rapidly, and the woman then took his arm and they proceeded up the avenue at a very leisurely pace, still in conversation.

Billy allowed them to pass where he stood, when he set out after them at as close a distance as he thought prudent.

It was about this time that three men made their appearance on the opposite side of the way, further down, and one of these pointed out something to the other two.

They were, needless to say, Underboy, Cuthbert, and The Judge. And behind them again, one on each side of the way, came Happy Harry and Silent Seth, like the veritable young ferrets they were.

They were laboring under a disadvantage, for they had no knowledge of what disguise Broadway Billy had assumed; but they were not long in the dark regarding that, for when "Judge" Gravey pointed to the opposite side from him, the boys followed the direction indicated, and saw the man and woman and another man following.

This other man they at once decided was their chief.

And they were not mistaken.

The three men walked arm in arm for a distance, talking earnestly, and the boy shadowers kept their distances behind them.

Presently Harry, who was behind them, heard an agreed-upon signal from Silent Seth, and glanced over to see what he wanted of him, when Seth pointed ahead and at once increased his pace.

"Wonder what's got the matter with him all of a sudden?" Harry queried to himself. "He's going to be seen, sure, for these fellows have their eyes on the boss, and as soon as Seth gets up with him he'll be in range o' sight. But, he's disguised, and mebbey he'll pass."

Harry had now two to look after—that is, two parties; the first the three men, and the other Silent Seth, to see what he meant to do.

Seth went straight on, at a pace just a little faster than Billy's, and when he was just abreast of him he said:

"Don't look, boss, but listen: Three men on other side of way are spotting you."

That was all, and without a pause or a turn of the head the Silent Shadower passed right on and turned the next corner.

His first words to Billy had put him on his guard, and Billy had taken the cue quickly, and had not so much as turned his head to look at his young ally.

When Silent Seth had turned the corner he dodged quickly out of sight, and waited for the procession to move past, when he would again fall in behind and take up his part in the game.

The woman and Prince Terger were still going on, arm in arm, and Broadway Billy kept his distance behind them.

After awhile he took a cautious look in the direction of the three men whom Seth had mentioned, to discover that they had detected him, and that he was known.

"They mean mischief," he said to himself; "but, let them come; they will probably find me at home."

Whatever their plan was, it was not carried out, for presently something happened that upset all the plans any of them might have laid.

The woman was seen suddenly to withdraw her arm from Terger's, and she stood off a step, looking at him with defiance, evidently talking rapidly and with great vehemence.

The next moment Terger sprung forward and seized her wrists, at which she gave a scream and called for the police.

Broadway Billy took it in at once, and believed he understood what it all meant. The young man had tried to make an arrest, and the woman was likely to get the better of it.

By calling the police herself, she would have their sympathies before Terger could explain, and he would probably be roughly handled while the woman would have an opportunity for escape. Billy resolved to balk that plan if possible, and he sprung to Terger's assistance.

No sooner that, than the other three men took action, running to intercept Billy and at the same time effect the escape of the woman.

"Jumpin' Jew's-harps!" cried Happy Harry. "The jeebeeb has got to get up and whistle now, for sure! There is going to be the climax of the cavort, or I'm a false prophet. There goes Seth to take a hand in it and here goes me!"

Seth was already running to the assistance of his master, and Harry was not a bit behind him.

A crowd was gathering, a policeman was coming from the opposite direction to the assistance of the screaming woman, and the three men were almost upon Broadway Billy.

Seth and Harry were immediately behind the three men as they reached Billy, and as the men set upon Billy the boys set upon them with astonishing vigor. One man gave Billy a blow that made him reel, but immediately the boys sent that fellow to the ground and sprung at the other two like young tigers.

Billy had by that time recovered, and with a single blow he sent another of the fellows down and was ready to tackle the third. But now the first was up again and rushing in.

The crowd was growing each second, and men stood gaping at the fight without knowing anything of the merits of the case.

"I am an officer," cried Billy. "I call upon you to help me take these men under arrest."

"He's a liar!" cried one of the men. "He's a thief, and we are bound to have him."

"Liar yourself!" cried Happy Harry, as he gave the man a punch in the neck that made him stagger.

The next instant Harry himself received a blow that sent him headlong into the crowd, and for the moment he was out of it.

By this time the policeman had reached the screaming woman, whom Terger was still holding determinedly, and both the woman and Terger spoke at once.

The officer gallantly heard the woman's words first, however, and gave Terger a rap on his hands with his club that broke his hold, and the woman immediately sprung out of his reach.

"Arrest that rascal!" the woman ordered, fiercely.

"Arrest the woman," cried Terger. "She is a swindler, and I will appear against her!"

"That is false, officer," the woman cried, excitedly. "Do not give him a chance to escape. I will go with you and make a charge."

The crowd was pressing around, and by this time the woman had put herself out of the policeman's immediate reach, while he had laid a heavy hand upon Terger, who was hastily telling his story.

The crowd was growing every second, and another policeman was hastening to the scene of the free fight, as it looked to be.

Up he came, and seeing that three men were after Broadway Billy, and not knowing Billy, he sprung into the fray and laid hold upon the one man, believing he must be the one in the wrong.

"Let go of me," cried Billy. "I'm Billy Weston, Broadway Billy. Help me to take these men."

"He's a pickpocket, that's what he is," thundered one of the men. "Keep your hold upon him, officer, while I lend a hand to take his accomplice just ahead here a step or two."

With that the man ran toward the place where the woman and Terger had been having their exciting time.

Harry was around again, now, and he sprung at one of the other men, at the same time that Silent Seth tackled the third.

These boys were in it to win, and meant to do their best, regardless of everything. They were, however, no match for the men, and were soon knocked aside again.

It is impossible for words to keep pace with the rapid action of the moment.

Broadway Billy was urging his identity upon the officer, demanding the opportunity to show his badge, and the two men were as urgently denouncing him.

The other man, Underboy, had reached where Terger was in the hands of the other officer, and hastily declaring that he had seen him trying to rob the young woman, promised that he would appear against him.

To this time no more than two minutes had elapsed.

The woman, now, had disappeared, and in another moment Underboy had become lost to sight in the crowd.

Happy Harry and Silent Seth were determined that the other two should not escape, and once again they sprung upon them with the fury of tigers.

"Somebody help us," urged Harry. "That is Broadway Billy, and we are his right and left bowers—we'll both be left if you don't lend us a hand. Don't let these rascals get away—"

A blow cut him short, and once more he was sent sprawling into the crowd.

"I'll hold you," cried the man, springing after him. "I'll have you put under arrest as well as that blustering pickpocket."

By this time Broadway Billy was getting at his badge, to satisfy the officer that he had made a mistake, and the two men were eager to get off and out of reach of the crowd.

Silent Seth, too, had been sent to the pavement by a heavy blow, where he remained in a half-stunned condition, and the crowd being on the surge of excitement all the time, the rascals managed to break through and become lost in a moment.

Seeing that the battle was lost, Happy Harry made his way out of the crowd, and as soon as he was sufficiently far away to avoid creating suspicion and drawing attention to himself, ran as swiftly as his legs could carry him. He had an object in view.

The whole evil set had escaped, while the innocent ones, the ones in the right, were detained until the policemen were fully satisfied of their identity and of the blunder they had made.

CHAPTER XVI.

WINNING ON THE LAST CHANCE.

It is quite probable that Broadway Billy had never been in such a rage as he was immediately after that lost battle.

He freed his mind fully, then and there, while the officers dispersed the crowd, and then looked around for his young allies.

Silent Seth was there, just getting over his dazed condition, but Harry was not to be seen. Billy looked around for him in vain.

Prince Terger, like Billy, was in a towering passion, for he had been able to satisfy himself that the woman had jewels upon her person which would condemn her if arrested then.

Billy held a brief conversation with him, but suddenly broke off in it to give some directions to Silent Seth.

"No telling where Harry is, Seth," he said, "but you go at once to that hotel and lie in wait for the game. One of them at least will appear there soon to get their effects."

Without a word Seth was speedily off; then Billy concluded his talk with Terger, learning from him what his plans had been and the game he had been trying to work to a successful issue, and when they parted each had work to do toward bringing the matter to an end.

Meantime Harry had made all haste to reach the hotel where the one woman had been left. The right thought had come to him at the right time, and he had acted upon it without delay while the way for his escape was open.

He had reasoned that these rogues would now probably make haste to shake the city, and their first move would be to go to the hotel before they could be followed for their traps.

When he came near the hotel, he was just in time to see two of the crooks enter.

Stepping into the doorway, Harry speedily made a slight disguise, and went on into the hotel office boldly.

As he entered, so did Warton Underboy and the woman, Mrs. Cuthbert, the latter well-nigh out of breath from over-exertion in the haste they had made.

Stepping to the desk, Underboy said:

"We will pay our bill at once. A death telegram calls us home in haste. By the way, have you a Central time-table handy?"

A time-table was handed him, and while the clerk made up the bill the man Underboy studied the table in haste to find when they might get a train.

"At ten-twenty," he soon announced. "That gives us just forty minutes to make the Forty-second-street Station. Hurry with the bill, clerk. You, Judge, go up and hurry the old lady and get the luggage down. Elmer, you get a carriage at once. No time to lose."

All this and more did Happy Harry hear, and he tried to lay a plan of action in haste.

To go to Billy would be useless, for he would not know where to find him. To remain there

and wait for him would not do, for this talk of going to the station might be only for a blind.

He hardly knew what to do, but he was not slow to decide. He would follow the suspects and thus be sure of not losing them. If they really meant to take a train he would have them stopped, if possible. If not then he would go along with them, no matter how far the trail led.

With that determination he passed out of the hotel to keep his eyes open for the carriage that was to be ordered, and while he waited he caught sight of Silent Seth coming toward the hotel with more haste than caution. As the silent partner drew near, however, he reduced his speed, and stepped for a moment out of sight to don a hasty disguise.

Harry hurried forward to meet him.

"What brought you here?" he asked.

"Boss sent me," was the answer.

"And he is coming?"

"Yes."

"Good. You wait here till he comes. I'll follow the game. Plan is, to get to the Grand Central in time to take the ten-twenty train. Tell boss to get there or bust. Anyhow, I'll stick to them like a leech. That's all. The jeebeeb hath spoken. Selah!"

"All right," was Seth's response, as Harry immediately moved away.

Realizing the good stroke Harry had done, and agreeing with him on his plan, Seth took up his part at once, for the present keeping out of sight.

Within ten minutes a carriage was ready before the hotel, and Seth keeping close watch saw Harry sneak around and take up his position under it where, in the dark, he was quite secure from observation.

The rascally crew soon appeared and got in, and the carriage turned and went off in haste.

Silent Seth smiled to himself as he thought how well the prey was still under watch.

They had not been gone ten minutes when Broadway Billy, now without disguise, and half a dozen policemen appeared upon the scene.

Silent Seth, he too having now removed all disguise, was quick to meet Billy to let him know what had taken place, and made known the facts in few words.

"You and Harry are trumps!" Billy cried. "Come on, boys," to the officers with him. "We'll have the game yet. We have just about enough time to get there nicely, and they must not escape us."

They all set out in haste for the Grand Central Station.

When they arrived at the station they were none too soon, nor were they any too late.

The evil-doers were in a group near one of the doors, waiting for it to be opened. At a far end of the room was Happy Harry earnestly talking to a policeman.

Broadway Billy smiled, as he saw the manner in which Harry was giving the officer the facts, but the officer shook his head and was evidently refusing to have anything to do with the affair on the word of a boy whom he did not know.

Harry was disguised yet, and was keeping his back toward the guilty ones so as to avoid all chances of recognition.

He looked around, presently, and seeing Billy, Seth, and the officers, came toward them at the double-quick as they were spreading out to take their game.

The rascals did not see them until they were almost upon them, when one of the party happening to look around made the discovery and quickly gave the alarm.

There was consternation in a moment.

Broadway Billy and the officers, with Harry and Seth, were closing in upon them, but were still some paces distant.

There was one chance, a long one, but it was better than none, and Underboy was quick to grasp it. At any rate it promised personal safety.

Seeing he was discovered, Broadway Billy gave the word for his men to hasten to the capture, at the same time that Underboy gave hasty directions for his accomplices to scatter.

It was all the work of a brief moment.

Underboy pushed the doorkeeper aside, flung the door open and dashed out into the train house.

Broadway Billy was after him like a flash, having given a hasty order to the officers to see that the others did not escape, and was immediately speeding away up one of the platforms in pursuit.

The officers, obeying promptly, closed in upon the others, but they met with something unlooked-for.

Elmer, as we have seen him called, and the "Judge," showed fight, and being desperate, they sent the officers spinning out of their way and were off.

Had the crowd not been so great they could not have escaped, but as it was they did. Several men tried to stop them, but were shoved aside, one or two being upset in the charge.

At the beginning of the trouble the passengers in the room had all rushed forward to learn what was the matter, and as a result the policemen were hemmed in, even though not more than a quarter of a minute had yet elapsed. That they were enraged goes without saying.

The only captures they had accomplished were the two women, together with the luggage the men had dropped at the first alarm.

"Out of the way!" one policeman cried.

"Don't let those men escape, there!"

"Stop them!" cried another.

"Halt! or we'll fire upon you!" called out a third, but it was all useless, for the fellows only increased their haste to get away.

The threat to shoot was useless, as the rascals no doubt knew, for it would have been folly to have tried it there in such a crowd; in fact, it was impossible, for it would have been death to some innocent one.

In the midst of all the uproar the two women were expressing their indignation in loudest tones.

"How dare you?" cried one.

"What do you mean?" demanded the other.

"You shall suffer for this mistake, you blunders!"

"Release us at once, sirs! What do you arrest us for! This is the height of outrage."

"Keep cool," said one of the officers, grimly.

"You'll have a chance to prove all the mistake there has been about it!"

"Stand out of the way, passengers!" commanded another of the blue-coats.

Even to this time not a full minute had passed.

The three male rascals had, however, escaped from the room, and the officers were badly left, except that they had the two women safe enough.

As soon as they were out of the crowd they looked around to get a sight of Broadway Billy and his boys, or any one of them, but not one of the trio was to be seen anywhere.

Those of the policemen who were free hastened to the doors, to look for the escaped men, but they had disappeared utterly.

There was, then, a brief consultation among them as to what should be done, and the conclusion arrived at was the natural one.

Two were to take the prisoners to the station, while the others were to tarry around in the hope of seeing something more of the rascals or of being of some use to the young detective and his team.

The prisoners were, accordingly, taken out and away, while the remaining officers gathered together to talk the situation over and offer excuses for their bad defeat.

They felt it keenly, even though hardly to blame.

In the mean time what of Happy Harry and Silent Seth?

They were not idle, as it is hardly necessary to assure the reader. Their absence was the proof for that.

Taking example by Broadway Billy, and being as quick as he to take in the situation, they had dodged out before the crowd had time to hem them in and were off in pursuit of Cuthbert and the "Judge."

These two had made for the nearest street door, making a hasty exchange of words as they ran, and no sooner out than they parted company and ran in different directions.

Silent Seth was the first out after them, and selecting the "Judge" as his game, started after him.

Harry, coming out the next moment, took in the situation, and set off hot upon the trail of the other rascal, Cuthbert.

And so they were separated, the detective trio, each with a part to play, and a most difficult one at that, but each with the determination to win if it were possible to do so.

Since we cannot follow all at once we must take them singly.

We will follow Happy Harry first.

Cuthbert crossed the street at a run, turned up, and speeded away eagerly to throw any chance pursuers off the track.

Happy Harry had all the tricks of the "gamin" at his command, and did not lose sight of his man, though he had to make his shorter legs do active duty to keep him in sight.

At the first street that crosses the railroad

tracks the man turned, making his way in the direction of Lexington avenue, and as Harry came to the same corner he saw him walking leisurely up the inclined footway, no doubt thinking himself now safe from molestation.

Having time now to do so, Harry made a change in his disguise as far as was possible, and regulated his pace so as to draw nearer to the man gradually.

At the middle of the bridgeway stood a policeman.

Cuthbert passed him at a natural gait, and the officer could suspect nothing wrong, of course.

The moment Happy Harry caught sight of the officer, though, his plan of action came to him like a flash, and stopping by him he said:

"That man there has just escaped from Detective Billy Weston and his men in the Grand Central."

The officer had roused up for action at the first words.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"I'm Happy Harry, Broadway Billy's Know-nothing," was the quick reply.

Even as he answered the question Harry was moving on, determined that the man should not escape him.

The officer came with him, saying:

"I don't know you, lad, and if I stop that man I may get myself into trouble. This is no hoax, is it?"

"No, honest Injun et ain't," urged Harry. "If you don't believe me, just holler stop thief! at him and see if he don't loosen the boards here in his scramble to get away."

"If you fool me I'll half kill you and then drag you in."

"You are welcome to do both. All I want you to do is to take the fellow in and bring him back to the station. Your pards there will prove what I say."

"All right, I'll take your word. Lordy help you, though, if it gets me into trouble."

With that, the officer sprung forward to make the arrest.

Cuthbert evidently heard his heavy tread, for he turned, and getting one look at him, broke and ran again.

"What did I tell ye?" cried Harry. "Shoot him if he don't come to time!"

"Stop!" cried the policeman. "Stop! or the worse for you! I tell you I will stand no fooling! Stop!"

But the man was determined not to stop, so the officer fired once in the air to give him a scare and so bring him to his senses. Even that, though, did not have the effect.

But, something else soon did, for another officer, at the corner, suddenly planted himself in front of the running man, and he was brought to a stand. He did not surrender, though, but fought like a tiger to get away again.

In that he might have succeeded, too, but the other policeman and Harry were immediately to the assistance, and the fellow was speedily subdued. He raved and blustered a good deal, but that did not help his case any, and he was taken back to the depot, where Harry's story was substantiated.

Silent Seth, at the same time, was having an experience that was in most respects similar.

The "Judge" had turned down the street, crossed 42nd, along which he speeded till he came to Fourth avenue, where he plunged into the tunnel as the most promising place of refuge.

He had looked back just before doing this, but had perhaps seen no one after him, for Seth was on the opposite side of the street to him and almost abreast with him by this time. It took the boy but a moment to cross over and continue the pursuit so well begun.

They had not gone far when a coming car was seen.

Seth stopped short to see what the man would do, for there was light enough along the side walls for him to observe well.

The man did not look back, but placing himself close along the wall he waited till the car came up when he caught hold of the handle and swung himself aboard, at once entering and taking a seat.

Seth performed the same trick, except that he waited for the rear of the car, and that he took care not to let himself be seen by the man he was after.

The conductor had stepped in to get the man's fare, evidently wondering at his getting aboard in such a place, and as there were several on the rear of the car Seth escaped him altogether.

It was lucky for Seth that he knew the man's face well, for otherwise he might have been deceived.

The man was sitting as comfortably as though he had come with that car all the way from its starting point, and was as unconcerned as though he intended sticking to it to the end of its route.

"And, as the end of its route was there, at the Grand Central, so he did."

When he got out he started at a leisurely pace for the stairs leading to the Elevated, but before he had time to ascend Silent Seth touched him on the arm.

The man gave a violent start and looked around.

"What d'ye want?" he snarled.

For answer Seth sprung upon his back, twisted his legs and arms around him, and began to yell:

"Police! Police! Police!"

The man cursed and fought to throw Seth off, but he could not get hold of him, and in a moment a great crowd was around them.

A policeman was speedily on the spot.

"What's wanted here?" he cried. "What's the matter, boy?"

"Curse this young rat!" shouted the "Judge," "he is trying to rob me!"

"Biggest lie on record!" cried Seth. "He has just got away from detectives and police in the station, and I've nailed him here."

"That is false!" cried the man. "Take him off, and I'll prove it."

"Bring him right into the waiting-room and let him prove it there," said the Silent Shadower.

He had proved that he could talk fast enough, when occasion required, or when he had something to say, as he had just now.

When the policeman took hold of the man Seth slid down, and it was then that the fellow tried to break away. A tap from the officer's club soon subdued him, however, and he was hurried around to the waiting-room.

There Seth's charge was proved true, and it was only a little while when Happy Harry came in with his man, as has been shown. The pair looked sheepish enough as they looked at each other, and they were soon taken off to the lock-up to which the two women had already been conducted.

But, the hardest fight of all had been between Broadway Billy and Underboy.

When Billy was running after him up the stone platform in the interior of the station the man turned and saw him.

Quick as a flash he whipped out a pistol and fired at Billy, point blank, but fortunately did not hit him, though the shot had one good effect for him, the rascal.

There was a lively scamper on the part of all the men in the place to get out of the way, and Billy could look for no assistance from them.

The gong was ringing for the starting of a train.

Turning, suddenly, the man leaped aboard the steps of some standing cars, and sprang over to the other side.

Broadway Billy might have shot him easily enough, expert with the revolver as he was, thanks to his Western experience, but he did not want to do that. He wanted to take the fellow without hurting him.

He sprang in the same direction, on the opposite end of the same car, and was over about as soon as the man himself.

Another shot greeted him, and the bullet sped uncomfortably near.

"Keep away!" the man cried out in warning.

"Don't try that again!" shouted Billy.

The man speeded across the other tracks to where a train was just starting, and sprang aboard.

Broadway Billy was just far enough behind him to be likely to get left, but he added to his exertions and managed to catch hold upon the last rail of the last car as it passed him.

A cloud of steam had settled down between pursuer and pursued, at the last moment, and Billy could not be sure his man had not got off again.

That was hardly likely, however, since he had exerted himself so to get aboard. And, for the same reason, the man could not be sure that he, Billy, had been able to catch the car.

Billy tried the door at once, and what was his chagrin to find it locked.

This was bad, but it did not balk Billy very long. He was as supple and agile as a cat, and he climbed to the top of the car in haste.

This was not hard to do, though it involved great risk, but Billy cared little for the risks when the importance of the capture was considered, so up he climbed and made his way along the top of the car.

He was cautious, and it occupied several moments for him to make the passage, but it was finally made safely.

Dropping down between the cars, he entered the door of the next car and began the search for his man. And he searched keenly and well, determined not to be deceived.

As he moved slowly forward, looking carefully at every man, his attention was suddenly drawn to a seemingly aged man on his right.

And what drew his attention to him was the fact that he detected a false beard, which, having been put on in haste, did not serve its purpose well enough to escape his eagle eye.

Without hesitation Billy reached out his arm over the back of the seat and tore the false beard away.

With an oath the wearer sprung to his feet, at the same time his hand flying to his hip for a weapon, and Billy saw he had made no mistake. This was the man he was after.

Quick as Mr. Underboy was, Billy was quicker still, and had a weapon under his nose in the true Texas style before he could tell what had happened.

"This trail ends right here," Billy cried.

"Up with your hands, old man, or I'll be under the necessity of doing you harm."

The other passengers, in greatest amaze, were scrambling over the backs of the seats in their mad haste to get out of range, wondering what it all meant, anyhow.

"Hands up!" Billy repeated, sternly. "I won't tell you again, either."

There was that in his eye which warned the prisoner that he meant business, and he surrendered without further parley.

Broadway Billy had the handcuffs upon him in a trice, and that done he made such explanation to the rest of the passengers as he thought necessary under the circumstances.

At the first station Billy got off, and shortly afterward caught a returning train and brought his prisoner safely back to the city.

His had been, as said, the hardest capture, and had it chanced to fall to one of the boys instead of himself the man might, and probably would, have got away. As it was—well, he didn't.

Arriving in the city Billy lost no time in taking his prisoner to the station where the others had been lodged, where he found Harry and Seth awaiting his coming.

There were congratulations all around, then, of course, and Billy could not say enough in praise of his "team."

When the prisoners were seen to be safely under bolt and bar, then Billy and the boys set forth to look up Prince Terger and so bring about the winding up of the affair.

He, from something he had learned from the woman, Mrs. Cuthbert, had a clew to the disposition that had been made of the diamonds that had been stolen from his care some time before.

They found him, and with Billy's help another arrest was made and the diamonds recovered.

Next morning, when Billy reported to the inspector, he was greatly praised.

The prisoners were brought to court for a hearing, when the testimony against them sent them down to await trial.

They were a bad lot, as was shown, and it was not believed that they would be allowed to get off with anything short of the heaviest penalty the law could inflict upon them.

Every one of them was under an assumed name, and they had been plying their game in New York for some time.

Many diamond merchants who had been swindled by them appeared against them.

Considerable of money was found upon them, and in one of Underboy's pockets was the amount in full which he had received from Archer and Race. That money was restored to its owners. The diamonds were then returned to their proper possessors.

It is not our purpose to explain in full the method they had employed in carrying on their nefarious work. Suffice it to say that it had been clever enough, and the young woman, under various names, had been the one to whom had been intrusted the work of exchanging the paste diamonds for the real.

Broadway Billy was present when Prince Terger made a full confession of everything to his faithful young wife, as he should have done in the first place, and it was an explanation which was entirely satisfactory. Remembering the woman who had looked at the diamonds one day after making a small purchase, he managed to trace her and find out who she was. He suspected her, and was weaving a chain of evidence around her, at the same time making her think he was playing into her hands; and he had been almost ready to have her arrested when he was arrested himself.

It had been Terger's purpose not to mention

the loss at all if he succeeded in getting the diamonds back again, for he was ashamed of the manner in which he had been duped.

With everything cleared away, the husband and wife were as happy as of old, and Prince vowed that he would never keep another secret from his wife. He had done so in this instance for the sole purpose of saving her the worry over the loss.

His employers were glad to receive him back in his old place, but with the caution never to keep such a matter secret again while he tried his hand at amateur detective work. It would have been better, of course, had he told them at once and employed professional services.

Broadway Billy was given great credit for the quick manner in which he had brought the case to a close, after taking hold of it, but he would not take all the praise to himself. He showed how well his two apprentices had done their parts, and so they came in for their share of the glory. And proud boys they were, too, though Silent Seth did not show it in any manner whatever. He was the "stoick," as Harry called him.

"And here we are yet," Happy Harry declared, when they had washed their hands of the case, "ripe and ready for anything that may turn up. Here's Broadway Billy, the Detective Chief; here's Silent Seth, the Silent Shadower—the Philosopher an' Stoick; an' here's yours truly, the Know-nothin' of the combination. We are a triangle combination that's set for rascality of any sort that crops out, and when we get into motion somethin' is leavin' to be done. And if folks don't believe it, let them come and give us a trial. Let any consarned diffikilty pop up under our notice, and see if we don't nip it in the bud before it comes to a head. That's just what we're here for, and don't you forget it. The jeebeeb bath spoken. Selah!"

THE END.

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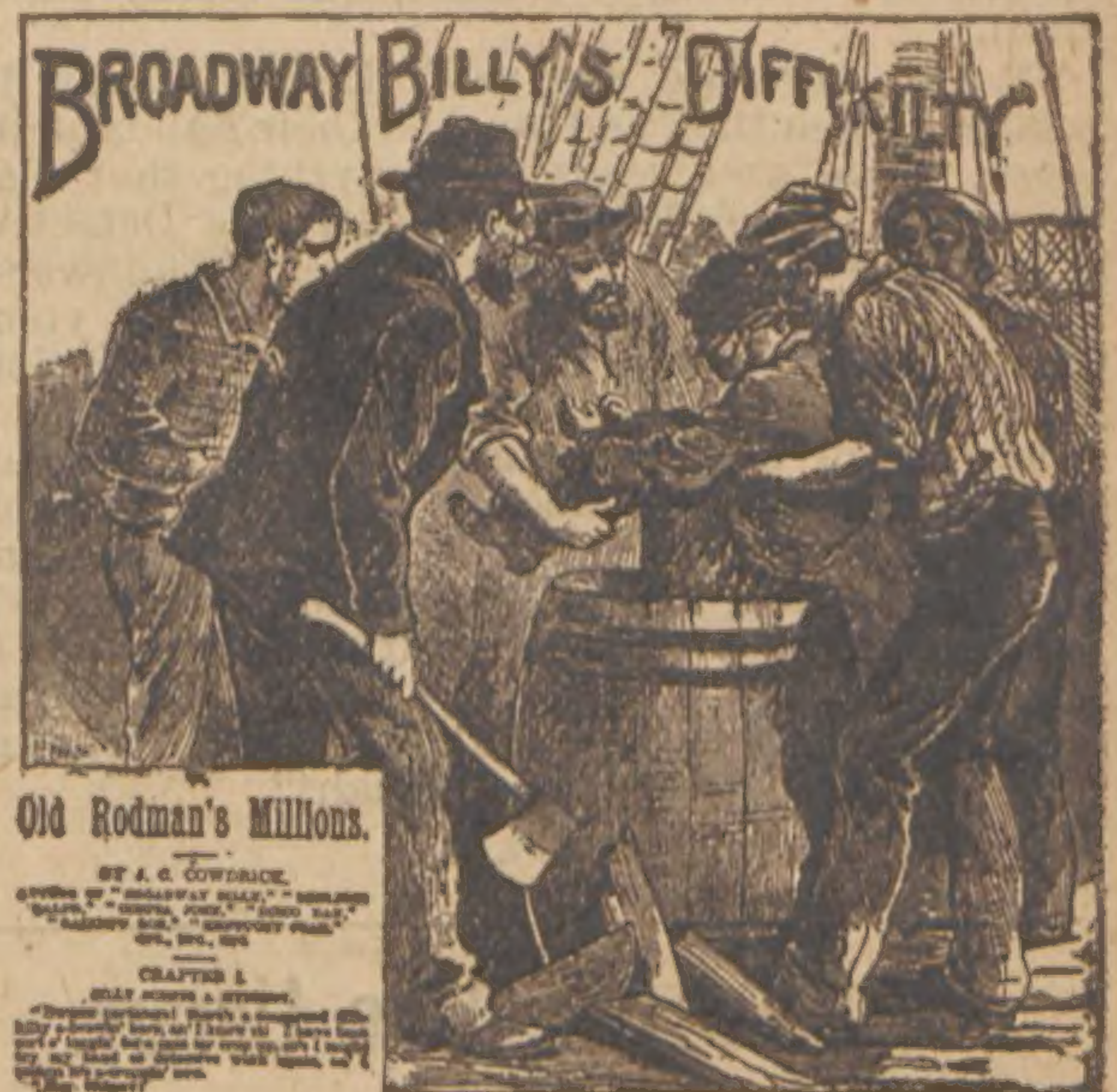


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